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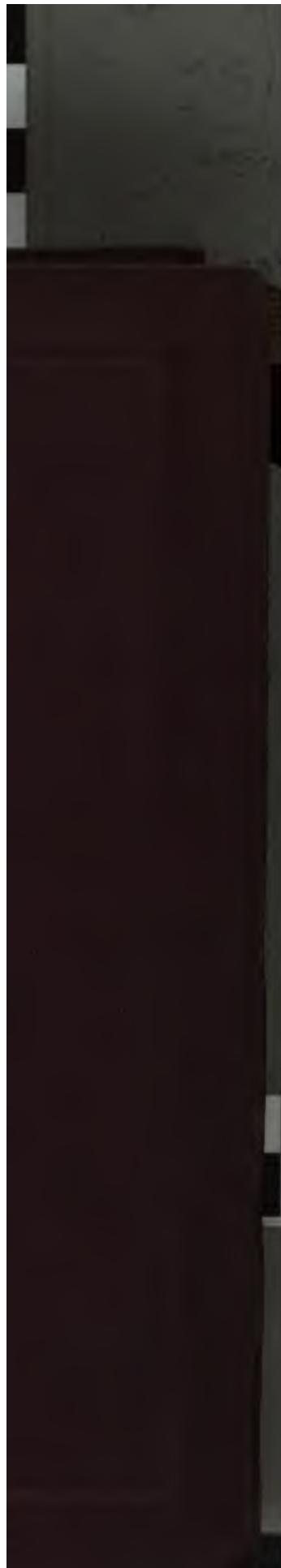
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BASIL ST. JOHN.

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A GLIMMERING OF THE TRUTH.



BASIL ST. JOHN

AN AUTUMN TALE



EDINBURGH: EDMONSTON & DOUGLAS

MDCCCLXV.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CLOSE OF THE SEASON.

“Quoi donc ! c'est un arrêt qui n'épargne personne,
Que rien n'est ici-bas heureux parfaitement.”

“WELL, good-night, old fellow. I have more work before me than you have during the next twenty-four hours. You have all your traps ready and I have not. It is past three now, and will be 4.30 before I am in bed, I know.”

“Nonsense, Basil ! you can't be tired, that's impossible.”

“I may be, for I have been dancing my legs off ; but as you would stand in Lady Armitage's doorway as if you were receiving the company, and stoutly refused to be of any use, except in clearing off your share of the supper, and mine also, I don't well see how you can pretend to be tired. Why won't you dance ?”

“Why won't I dance ? you know well enough : what's the use of it ? I don't care for dancing for its own sake, and I only go out to try and find a wife, though how

I am ever to marry, unless I come into a fortune or chance to pick up an heiress, I don't know."

"I don't see my way to either of these things ; but for all that, I don't see why I should not enjoy society all I can. It keeps one out of a peck of other troubles ; of that I am quite sure. And if I do flirt, as you say I do, why, there is less harm in an innocent flirtation than in most things we men do ; but we shall have plenty of time to argue the point out in the North : long evenings and plenty of toddy ; we may smoke and talk our minds out."

"I don't know about that, Charlie ; my sister won't approve of the smoking, I fancy. She keeps every one in great order, and Sir Gilbert amongst them, for all that he considers her completely his toy. Why, his going to Scotland at all this year was entirely to please her Ladyship. Dear old fellow, he doesn't care for anything except his beloved hounds, and only thinks the non-hunting part of the year must be got through somehow ; so when Augusta thought that you and I and the children would be the better for some bracing air, why, she just contrived to make her husband think he might as well kill time on the moors as elsewhere ; and embarked him in negotiations with Snowie, which have resulted in their taking a charming moor in the

north-west Highlands. The fishing is first-rate; the number of stags to be killed limited to ten.—I don't believe one was ever seen within ten miles of the lodge. —But you will know more about it this day week. As for me, I am dead sick of London; out night after night, *cui bono?* vanity and vexation of spirit. I hate the whole system. Well, I must go, I'm sure it's high time, and our cigars are almost finished. Good-night, think of the loss we shall be to society."


So parted, at the corner of Berkeley Street, one lovely morning early in July, Charles Hay and Basil St. John, and as they are the joint heroes of this episode of life, perhaps they had better be described.

They were about the same age. Basil St. John might be a year the senior, and he was a little more than twenty-five years old. Tall and fair, with a broad, well-made figure, small hands and feet, he was not what most people would call good-looking; but with an expression of sweetness in his clear blue eye, redeeming the indecision which the mouth betrayed. In it you could trace a sadness, and hopeless aspiration after better things, unfulfilled through weakness of purpose.

Charles Hay was as complete a contrast to him as you could well find, cousins though they were; there

was nothing in their ways or features to lead you to suppose they were related.

He was a strong-built, athletic young man, with a particularly buoyant, joyous temperament, which shone through his eyes. Perhaps the word "cheery" would best describe the effect his face produced on people, with its bright eyes, regular features, crisp, curly dark-brown hair, and sunny expression of careless happiness. He was the penniless son of a man who had spent all he ever possessed ; and more than that, had so deeply mortgaged his property in the west of England, that when he died his widow found that her eldest son Charles must work for his bread, as she had only a jointure of some eight hundred a year to maintain herself and educate her children. Charles, who was of age at his father's death, when he found that he could only succeed in getting £300 a year from a property that ought to have produced him as many thousands, determined at once to go into a public office, much as he disliked the sort of life. It was something to do ; that was what he was seeking, and nothing else offered itself to him. Now, when we come across him first, he was trying to make both ends meet, with difficulty, in a lodging in St. James' Place. He was so joyous and light-hearted by nature, and so bright and sunny in



disposition, that his circumstances did not weigh him down in any way, as they would have done most people; and yet few could say they coveted his lot in life.

His cousin, Basil St. John, envied him his spirits, but perhaps he could not quite enter into the secret of his cheerfulness; could not understand how on principle he tried to see and make the best of things; how he had had many a battle with his inclinations before he had made them subservient to his will. He had now been grinding away at his office for nine months, when he received Lady Frankland's invitation to make one of their party in Scotland; "to come as soon as you can, and stay as long as you can; and get health, fishing, and shooting, as much as you like, to say nothing of the pleasure of my society, and that of a very jolly girl into the bargain. I won't tell you who it is, Master Charlie, but I think you will approve of my companion, even if you don't fall in love, which it seems to me you nineteenth-century young gentlemen never do, except for six hours or so."

Such was Augusta Frankland's invitation to her young cousin, and Charlie, whose only alternative was to spend his holiday at his mother's very quiet little home near Cheltenham, accepted it gladly, having re-

ceived his mother's sanction, and assurance that she could spare him, and that he had far better go.

He had spent the past week in a state of great excitement, voting Lady Frankland the best of cousins, and Sir Gilbert a model husband. Of course, he deemed it incumbent on himself to be provided with all the tackle that Farlow and Chevalier could put into his rod-box and fly-book, and his gun had been at Purdey's to be put in the highest order. Even the favourite old retriever Furbo had been sent for to town, and was occupying a large space in his master's little room. In short, long before the day named for their journey, Charlie was ready for his start, which, however, was not to take place till the day after this.


We will go back to Basil St. John, and watch him as he walked slowly across to his grandfather's house in Berkeley Square. He sighed, for he thought that here was another London season over for him. Four months ago he had come up to town, and what had he to show for it, and for all the time spent? His thoughts wandered back to his childhood, his mother's deathbed, and her anxiety about him, and then his father's death, when he was eighteen, and just entering life, and when he felt that a father's hand might have guided and helped him, and he wondered why it was

that he who so specially needed that guidance had been just the person left alone without any check upon him. His grandfather, Lord Pendarves, was doatingly fond of him, the only son of his youngest and most loved child. From the moment of Basil's father's death, Lord Pendarves could seldom bear to have him away from him. He cared little for the eldest son, who had married against his wishes, and who lived almost entirely out of England.

Basil's eldest sister, Lady Frankland, had been his great friend and companion, and when he was a boy, and she a young lady a few years his senior, she had helped him through many a scrape and difficulty ; but she had married just before her father's death, and her influence and cares became centred in her husband and children, and she could no longer be conscience-keeper to her brother, as she had been in their early days. Basil recalled the picture of his college life, its trials and temptations, the good resolutions made again and again, and as often broken ; the determination not to give way, and then the weakness when the trial came ; and with all this the consciousness that he was meant for higher things than to live merely from day to day idling away life and its opportunities. He had come to town when his grandfather's failing health obliged

him to live almost entirely in London, to be near his doctor. And once in London, young, good-looking, with a very taking, gentle manner, but without any strength of mind, what chance had Basil St. John against the temptations of "the world, the flesh, and the devil"?

His innate principle made him resolve to struggle against all that he knew to be wrong, and not to let the advantages with which he had been blessed be thrown away. Ah, he remembered it all too well; the great resolutions with which, after an idle, useless time at a private tutor's, he had gone up to Oxford, firmly determined to be an honour to the good old name. And how, for a month or so, he had won golden opinions from dons and proctors alike, till he almost thought that the old trials had passed away, and that he should win the place in the class-list that his fond father had always hoped for him. Alas for human plans based on their own strength only! But a few days later, Basil St. John met, at a friend's wine-party, Guy Trevelyan, a capital fellow, in the world's acceptance of the words, heir to £15,000 a year, and shortly to join the Hussars, who had been the crack "fellow" at Eton, and now, at Christchurch, was foremost in every scene of dissipation, but withal carrying into every orgie the most bewitching and fascinating manner that ever



man possessed, for the beguiling alike of men and women. Tall and strong as Hercules, Basil could see him now, as he came across the room to him, and said, holding out his hand, "Mr. St. John, your father and mine were old friends, are we not going to follow their example?" and how, as he blushed and hesitated, Guy linked his arm through his, and led him away to his rooms, to have, as he said, a good talk over the west country. That that talk was not of the west country, but of things he had better never have listened to, how well Basil remembered, and marvelled as he recalled the stories where men's vices and women's weakness were alike held up to him, why he had listened and given way to temptation, which he now felt it would have been easy enough to withstand, had he been determined to do so. Basil had failed in that point in which most men fail—moral courage. And he knew it; knew how the force of bad example had dragged him down at first; and how, since then, he never had the strength of mind to live up to the standard which he felt was the right one. With all his faults, a more lovable being could hardly have been found; and even the men of his acquaintance, who were least given to praise others, all found a good word for Basil St. John.

"Well, here's the end of another season, and no wife

found yet. What shall I do next year, for I am dead sick of London ? Why have I nothing to do ?" he said to himself, as he threw his cigar away on reaching the door-step of Lord Pendarves' house, where he stood for some moments leaning against the rails and meditating, to the great astonishment of policeman X., who was walking up and down on his beat opposite.

" Well, I'll think it fairly over in Scotland if Gilbert does not put an end to me with one of his wild shots ; and now I really must turn in ; I've got to brave it out with my grandfather about that last mortgage to-morrow early ; and it's a long way into to-morrow, as Paddy would say."

CHAPTER II.

HEY FOR THE NORTH!

“Behind their course the English fells
In deepening blue retire,
Till soon before them boldly swells
The muir of dun Redswire.”

Border Minstrelsy.


“For pleasures past I do not grieve,
Nor perils gathering near;
My greatest grief is that I leave
No thing that claims a tear.”

Childe Harold.

AT about 8.15 P.M. the same day, Basil St. John was to be seen on the platform of the Euston Square station, walking up and down, and watching the clock, awaiting Charles Hay, who was rather apt to arrive at the last moment,—having generally put off his packing as late as possible, and being obliged to give the cabman double fares as the only chance of catching the train.

Knowing this peculiarity of his cousin's, Basil had

provided accordingly, and had tickets taken, places secured, and everything arranged as comfortably as circumstances would permit, for the long night journey, which under any conditions must be wearisome enough. Basil being one of those persons who attach a good deal of importance to the minor comforts of life, and having no one else to care for, generally looked after himself pretty well; not that he was really selfish, but partly from being much alone, and partly from his grandfather and sisters considering him a great deal, he was apt to think his own affairs were more important to the world at large than was the case. Even now, as he paced up and down, he was revolving in his mind what the people in Rotten Row would think of his not being there next day; whether Lady This and Miss That would miss him much; not that he cared one pin whether he ever saw them again, but he could not think it possible he should not be an object of thought to others, and be missed; when the fact was, that for one so shy and quiet the world had little or no thought. Of all mistakes, one of the greatest is to think that the London world has time to sit and reflect on, and regret its absent members. Once out of sight, they are most entirely out of mind. Unless some very startling scandal or accident in the country brings a person before their



minds once again for a few moments, no thought of him or her will cross them, so long as *they* are mixed up or wound up in the vortex of "going out."

"8:35.—Confound the fellow, he will miss the train, and I shall have this dull journey all alone." These words were muttered to himself by Basil, as Charlie rushed through the doorway, blinking his eyes as he came from the twilight into the full bright blaze of gas on the platform.

"Oh, here you are at last, you unpunctual individual."

"Unpunctual! not a bit of it; look at the clock—five minutes till the train goes; it's just as unpunctual to be ready too soon as too late. You seem to have taken time by the forelock anyhow, to judge by your arrangements. Why, bless the man! it's to be hoped we shall be comfortable," Charles added, as he stepped into the carriage, which Basil's servant was arranging with plaids and lanterns.

"What's the use of being otherwise when you can avoid it?" said Basil. "We shall be miserable enough on the abominable steamer to which our fate condemns us to-morrow."

"Well, I mean, weather permitting, to enjoy myself even there," answered Charlie; "but here goes the

train. Good-bye, London, for two months. Upon my word, this is very jolly ; but I should laugh if all your beautiful arrangements were upset by somebody getting in the first time we stop."

"Oh, I've squared that with the guard. I'm used to going down this way to Scotland ; and now, old fellow, I'm going to sleep. By the bye, did I tell you we are to put up together in a small house, quite close to the lodge, and not in it ?"

"*Tant mieux*," said Charles Hay, "for I am a smoker, you know, as well as yourself, and Augusta won't mind it there. Who have the Franklands got up there, I wonder ; for she says in her letter that we shall meet some pleasant people ?"

"I met old General Tremaine, who was Sir Gilbert's guardian, and he said he was going there, and that is ten days ago. Then that keen sportsman Ogle has been flogging the river for a fortnight and more, I believe ; not much use if the weather has been as dry as we have had it here. I hear there's an heiress, too, down in that part of the world."

"Hang heiresses !" said Charlie. "I never met one I could admire yet."

"They say this girl has heaps of money, but I forget her name, and now I really am going to sleep. Good-

night," said Basil, so he rolled himself up in his corner and shut his eyes.

Little worthy of remark happened to our travellers till they found themselves, in due course of time, on the steamer, fairly launched on their way through the Kyles of Bute, winding through lovely scenery. Charles Hay went into ecstasies at the beauty of the Crinan Canal, and then they again embarked from Oban, and followed the coast of Scotland due north, leaving the lovely Cuchullin Hills on the left, and embarked next day in a small boat which took them to one of the sea lochs on the coast of Sutherlandshire, and landed them almost at Sir Gilbert Frankland's lodge door.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST ACQUAINTANCE.

“Benedetto sia 'l giorno, il mese e l'anno.
E la stagione il tempo e l'ora e'l punto
E'l bel paese, e'l loco ov'io fu giunto
Da due begli occhi che legato m'hanno.”

PETRARCH.

A MORE glorious morning than that which dawned on Glen Cannisp the day after our heroes' arrival was perhaps never seen. The view from the shooting lodge was one of the most lovely, even in that beautiful country. The house consisted of a variety of small bedrooms, many of them mere pigeon-holes, and two sitting-rooms on the ground floor, one used as a dining-room, but full of the nameless odds and ends that sportsmen think it necessary to drag down to Scotland with them—rods, lines, sea fishing-tackle, fishing-baskets, innumerable feathers for making flies, etc. etc. Hookham's book box was pushed under one corner of the sofa, opera-glasses hung on two horns of the stag's head which was the triumph of past years' shooting. A small glass was over the chimney-piece,

which startled every one by the conviction that Scotland could not possibly agree with them if they looked so green.

The windows of both sitting-rooms overlooked the bay. The drawing-room was a cozy little apartment, into which Lady Frankland had contrived to squeeze a piano which she had hired from Glasgow, a small table on which to dissect and examine all the treasures for her microscope, another with the sketching apparatus belonging to Miss Moncrieff, the young lady whom Lady Frankland had brought down with her to Scotland. Plenty of work and books and reviews lay about the room, giving it a very cheerful appearance.

The view from the windows was especially pretty, and they were now thrown wide open. The main road of that side of Scotland passed immediately at the bottom of the very small garden which lay in front, this being reckoned a great advantage by those who live in a very out-of-the-way part of Scotland. The bay was lovely, surrounded by mountains not particularly high, but shelving down rapidly to the shore; partly clothed with stunted fir-trees and birch woods, which contrasted well with the rich brown, red, and yellow sea-weed, that completely covered the rocks where they touched the sea. The bay was one of those

inland sea lochs, which people at first thought was enclosed on all sides ; but there was a narrow opening at the west end, as you found out on seeing twice a week the steamer from Glasgow round the far-off point, and cast anchor in the bay. On a bright day, from a little hill above the house, the Isle of Lewis was clearly to be seen, looking more lovely at that distance through a golden haze than on a nearer approach to its damp, inhospitable shores. The little herring-boats, of which a tiny fleet lay now at anchor, came dropping in one by one, returning from the Wick fisheries, very different craft from the Sussex luggers, and better calculated to weather the heavy storms of the iron-bound, merciless coast of Cape Wrath. This time they had all reached home in safety, and great had been the rejoicing of the guidwives ; but that it was a perilous calling, and one which entailed constant anxiety, they could never forget ; and one felt that the lines,

“ Wives and mithers, maist despairing,
Ca’ them lives of men ”—

were no bad representation of what were the feelings of the poor women who were now welcoming their sons, husbands, and fathers.

The small village if indeed it could deserve such a

name—lay scattered near the lodge, which had once been the inn, but had been abandoned as such by the owner, being too much out of the way for travellers or tourists. The kirk and schoolhouse, blacksmith's forge, and a few houses formed of peat, and one or two of more pretension built of stone, completed the hamlet, principally inhabited by the fishermen, whose sons now found plenty of employment as gillies. Amongst this latter class Duncan Munro was the great notoriety. He was a stalwart Highlander, about sixty years of age, tall, upright, and hard-featured, a shrewd and far-seeing man, with great powers of observation, and a considerable amount of worldly wisdom; and with but one drawback to his character—a partiality for more whisky than he had money to pay for or head to carry. Weather-worn and bronzed, he was the picture of health and strength, and had often been heard to say, that never since he was born had sixpence been spent on him for doctoring, except when he was vaccinated. This man was the best gillie on the place, and as true as steel to his master, as long as the whisky and he could be kept apart. The cottages were as poorly furnished as you would expect from their exterior appearance. The food of their owners consisted mainly of potatoes, oatmeal, and dried hake, a sort of coarse cod,

the people being too lazy and careless to seek for the lobsters and oysters with which the bay abounded.

Lady Frankland proved a godsend to them, for she rated them well for their dirt and idleness; helped to get places in England for some of the strong lasses, with whom the houses swarmed; aided the mothers to doctor sick children, and send them to school; and the following winter many a good bale of blankets found their way from Sir Gilbert's house in England to the poor of Glen Caunisp.

To return to the drawing-room, into which meanwhile has entered Lady Frankland, to whom, as one of the fairest and liveliest of English matrons, we must give a little attention. She was tall and slight, with brown hair and eyes; a very active and sensible woman, without a shade of romance about her. About twenty-eight years had passed over her head. She was devoted to her husband, Sir Gilbert, who was nearly twenty years her senior, and very proud of her two children, young Gibby, the heir-apparent, and a little baby girl. She entered thoroughly into all Sir Gilbert's amusements, and was indeed herself very fond of hunting, though in public she checked the constant conversation on the subject, which her guests generally thought no bad plan on her part. She was very fond

of her brother Basil, and the wish of her heart was that he should not only marry, but marry very well; being thoroughly imbued with the idea that possessed their grandfather, Lord Pendarves, that "Basil must marry money." But Basil was so fastidious that she almost despaired of accomplishing her purpose; and whenever any girl good-naturedly tried to draw out that "poor shy young man," he instantly thought that she was making up to him, and drew in his horns like a snail, till the good-natured girl generally concluded he was not shy, but simply dull.

After Lady Frankland had been in the room a few minutes, a scuffling noise was heard outside the door, and a ring of childish laughter, with the sound of the door-handle vainly twisted by small hands; till a firmer grasp opened it, and in ran a fine boy of three years of age, closely followed by a girl, whom though you would not call lovely by any stretch of the imagination, you could not fail to notice, and noticing, to ask who she was. She was of middle height, fair, with deep dark-grey eyes, with a beautiful figure, and a profusion of fair hair, of that particular shade which the French call *blond cendré*. The expression of her face was peculiarly sweet and gentle, but very lively. Her feet and ankles, which were shown by her looped-up gown, were neat

and well-turned ; and in her black skirt and blue Garibaldi shirt she looked remarkably well. Such was Evelyn Moncrieff at twenty-two ; and if you had seen the hearty way in which she entered into all the child's ecstasy of spirits at the acquisition of a small retriever puppy, with which Duncan Munro had just presented him, you would have indeed acknowledged that she was a light-hearted and kind companion. Gibby was trying to find a name for the puppy, and as at present his pronunciation was none of the clearest, all the names he tried sounded much the same.

" Well, Gibby, what's its name to be ? Come, put it on my lap, and let's look at it, and see who it is like."

" It's like *ou*," said the child, as it dropped the wretched pup, which he had been lugging about for some time like a parcel, into her lap, " and it's to be called Evy."

" But that's not a dog's name."

" Well, then, I'll call it *Tartie*, like that kind man who came to see me in bed last night."

" Well, *Tartie* be it," said Evelyn. " As I was up at Achmelvich last night I didn't see Gibby's hero," she added, addressing Lady Frankland. " Do you think I should know him by the likeness ?" she said, holding

up the soft black pup, that looked so wisely at her with its hazy blue eyes.

"Hardly, dear, except in the matter of the hair, which is nearly as short ; but here comes the youth in question. Regular London hours, Charlie, but we will excuse you to-day. By the bye, though known by fame, you are not personally acquainted with Miss Evelyn Moncrieff, and though, in general, to tell people to be great friends is quite enough to stop all acquaintance, still, I am sure that you two young people will suit each other well, for you have much the same tastes and ideas."

Having said so much just to put Charlie at his ease, Lady Frankland left the room to make the breakfast, and Charles Hay was left to do the agreeable to the young lady.

"Have you ever been in this part of the world before, Mr. Hay?" said Evelyn, getting up from the floor, where she had been sitting, so as to be more on a level with her playfellow Gibby.

"Never, Miss Moncrieff, till this year ; I have always had my leave in the winter, and been bound to go to my mother's. But once here, I must say that the country is marvellously beautiful, and tempting enough to make one wish to see much more of it ; be the laird of some

ilk or other, and have one's digging up here instead of in St. James' Place."

"One cannot have everything, Mr. Hay. Remember, we see the best of Scotland, coming to it for a few weeks in the full summer time; the weary winters and long cold springs are no pleasant things, I am told. Talk to any of the gillies, and they will speak of this as their harvest-time in every way. But tell me, please, for this is too early in the day to begin a discussion on Highland scenery, did you leave London very regretfully; and oh, do tell me what are we all to do to amuse Mr. St. John, whom I always have heard of as so *blasé* with everything and everybody; voting life, London, and almost himself a bore?"

"Poor Basil; who has been giving him this character Miss Moncrieff? I can understand it, though," said Charlie; "he is very apt to talk of his private troubles to the world at large, having no one at home to sympathize with him; and then he is not very strong, and things seem worse to him than they really are. But when you come to know him as I do, he is the kindest, truest friend that ever breathed—liberal to a fault. Many and many a time has he given me a helping hand; morally and physically, he's as good as gold. Forgive me, Miss Moncrieff, for speaking like this to a compara-

tive stranger, only I know so well how people get damaged by a bad reputation preceding them, that I could not help asking you not to prejudge him, and—”

“I was sent by her Ladyship to tell you that you were waited for and missed at breakfast,” said a voice, as the door opened and there appeared General Tremaine, who merits a few words of description. You could hardly look at him without laughing: a perfectly round red good-tempered face, counting perhaps some fifty-five summers; a baldish head fringed with grizzled hair; small keen eyes, which took your measure kindly, but pretty accurately withal. His general appearance impressed you with the idea of great comfort and cheerfulness. He had married early in life, and was much attached to his wife, and when she died, a few years after her marriage, he had never cared to take another. He was content to be every one’s friend and adviser. And though he did tell the same stories night after night, and laugh at them himself with a loud “Ha, ha, ha!” he was so very happy and cheerful that he never bored any one, and never found out that people laughed to see him laugh, and not at the wit of his stories.

He had been Sir Gilbert Frankland’s guardian, and was very proud of his late ward, and of his wife, with her bright face and kind ways. How could he do other-

wise than love her, for she was always ready to listen to him, and spoil him, and take care of and attend to the old man's comforts—even like the daughter he had often pictured to himself that he might have had, had the little blossom not been nipped in the bud, and wife and child laid side by side in one grave?

"I was just thinking Lady Frankland would be ready for us," said Miss Moncrieff, taking up Gibby in her arms, who, however, stoutly resisted being on any other support than the legs of which he had so lately found the use.

"Come here and let me carry you," called out General Tremaine, "and you shall be taller than any of us;" and so saying he hoisted the child on to his shoulders; and he would inevitably have been knocked over backwards by the door frame, had not Charles called out, "Remember, General, these doorways are not as high as White's or the United Service Club."

"There are the young people, Milady. I expect that Master Gibby had something to do with their non-appearance." Evelyn laughed as she sat down in the first empty chair. When she had done so, she found herself seated between Mr. Ogle, the mighty fisher, with whom she could not have many ideas in common, and a strange young man, whom she knew at a glance to be

Basil St. John. Lady Frankland was too much absorbed with her teapot and her child to find time for an introduction ; so after an observation or two to Mr. Ogle, who either answered her in monosyllables, or else in such technical sporting language as to convey to her very little idea of his meaning, she thought it was ridiculous to remain thus silent to her other neighbour, with whom she knew she was going to spend the next six weeks. With rather a heightened colour, for notwithstanding Charles Hay's praise, she still felt as if Mr. St. John was a high and mighty town-made man, she turned to him and said, "Mr. St. John, I'm going to be bold enough to begin our acquaintance, as the fact of our being strangers to each other has escaped Lady Frankland's attention : I am Evelyn Moncrieff, as perhaps you may guess."

Basil St. John's manner in answering certainly was not fine, for he blushed rather as he said, "I heard Augusta had a very charming companion, but she did not tell us who it was ; but I do not feel as if we were complete strangers to each other, for I see we have many mutual friends by the photograph-book which Augusta put into my hands to keep me quiet just now, and which, I presume, was yours, by the monogram on it."


"What a shame to show my photograph-book—my pride and glory," said Evelyn, laughing.

"Not a bit a shame," rejoined Basil; "don't you feel that it has saved us a great deal of trouble, and of fishing about for our mutual acquaintances? I see you have one of my cousin Miss Hay; do you know her well?"

"Not well," answered Evelyn, surprised at finding how quickly she had slipped into an easy conversation with the very man she had settled would be fine and difficult to get on with; "I was once staying with her in a country house for a few days, and thought her very handsome; but I have not seen much of her since. Is she a great ally of yours?"

"Yes, rather," said Basil in a hesitating voice. "But tell me, who is Miss Susan Mackenzie, whose photograph I see in your book, in something like a semi-volunteer costume, at least as far as the cap and jacket go? It has excited my curiosity very much."

"Have you been twelve, no, nearly sixteen hours, in the Highlands, and not yet heard of *the lady par excellence*—the great heiress, and the most active minded and bodied of women? I like her very much; she is wonderfully frank and simple in her manner, and very clever into the bargain; she does everything well she puts her hand to."



"Is that the heiress I have heard so much of? She looks very handsome for a dark girl. No; yesterday evening my brother-in-law was so much engrossed by the little news we could give him of a sporting kind, and what was doing at Tattersall's, that we heard of nothing else. But this girl must be something remarkable, tell me more about her."

"Tell me more about her," thought Evelyn, "that's rather exacting." Then running on aloud, "Oh, you'll hear enough about her, and see her too, for she is constantly here. As her place, Achmelvich Castle, is only three miles from this, we meet most days. Somehow our company here generally contrive to think it a very short three miles to go and see the heiress, and a very long three miles to the kirk."

Basil went on languidly filling his plate, and seemingly quite at home with a Scotch breakfast, reflecting, on his part, that this girl, with her fair young face and forthcoming manners, was pleasant to sit by and look at, with her bright brown hair coiled at the back of her small, well-shaped head; and she had blue eyes too. Now if there was one thing in a woman that Basil preferred to another, it was fair hair and blue eyes.

Then he thought that she was just the sort of girl to suit Charlie, and he looked across at him. Charlie was

at that moment very busy, humanely employed in trying to prevent Gibby from choking his puppy, he having been occupied in cramming bits of bread into its mouth for some minutes, and Basil laughed at the determined way in which Charlie collared the dog and took it away from Gibby. By way of speaking a word to Miss Moncrieff, and to interest her about his cousin, Basil turned round to her, somewhat expecting to find her waiting for his next observation, which she was not doing in the least, but was listening attentively, and really seeming to care for Mr. Ogle's elaborate description of how he had the day before, on the Otter Pool, twice raised the heaviest fish he ever saw — why are the fish that people raise and never catch always the biggest they ever saw?—how he had changed the fly four times, and all to no purpose. Basil was rather surprised that she did not seem to see he was waiting to speak to her, but as she did not, he devoted himself to the good things that were before him, till at last his own fishing keenness became excited by the conversation, and when a pause came in their talk, he put in a word across Miss Moncrieff, regarding the superiority of London-made casting-lines to gut—to all others, to all of which facts Evelyn seemed quite alive, and joined in their conversation gracefully and easily, till at last Basil said to her,

"Why, Miss Moncrieff, you know, I think, as much about the matter as I do."

"Thank you for that small crumb of commendation," she said, laughing. "By dint of hearing things constantly talked about, you must admit that even a woman may pick up something."

"Even a woman! that is very bitterly said, Miss Moncrieff," answered Basil, as Mr. Ogle turned to speak to his other neighbour; "as a rule, I think women far more ready-witted than men, and much more likely to remember anything, when once they can be got to take an interest in it. But don't you think a woman's interest in a thing generally comes from some association, or something of the kind, in the first instance, and is more likely to be connected with some person—man, woman, or child, as the case may be—than the thing itself?"

Evelyn hesitated a moment, and then said, "Perhaps so; I can't tell, but at all events I am glad you do not abuse our warmer and less unprejudiced feelings. But we are getting into very deep conversation; tell me now, to change the subject, whether you are not glad to be in Scotland, and really able to enjoy your liberty, instead of being penned up in London. Half-past nine: I suppose you would have been in bed for the next two

hours, and only dressed in time for breakfast, and your walk in Rotten Row."

"Something very like it," sighed Basil. "Yes, indeed, I am glad that Charlie made me come away with him, and yet to the last I had an idea I should not get away, and people could not understand one's leaving before the season was finished. Dear me, I suppose I might have danced on for the next month, for to-night I think I had three balls."

"Don't think me rude, Mr. St. John, but I really think if coats and trousers were put on to pokers and tongs, they would get plenty of invitations to balls. I really don't mean to say anything rude, and I daresay you will think mine an uncouth attempt at consolation, but had you seen what I did during the season I spent with my aunt, Lady Fitzwalter, and the sort of way she hailed all the young men for her balls, merely because they were men—people whom in an ordinary way she would not have looked at,—you would be surprised."

"I can quite believe you," said Basil humbly. "I have no very great opinion of the merits of my own sex, when they are young, I can tell you. Women are worth any amount of them, and indeed—"

Here he was interrupted by Lady Frankland getting

up from the table and saying, "Gilbert, dear, please tell me what luncheon will be wanted to-day, that I may tell Maggie, who is an autocrat in her way, and does not like messages sent through the servants."

"What will you young fellows do? At present the river is very low, but it's looking cloudy now, and there is a little westing in the wind, so maybe, on the tail of the Long Pool, and the Minister's Pool, you might raise a fish. As for you, Ogle, you are going to troll in the loch for a bull-trout, I know—*Salmo ferox*, as Duncan Munro always takes pains to call it."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the General. "Well, he certainly picks up the names right enough. I'll come with you, Ogle, and then I'll try the otter on the lower loch as we come home."

"Very well then, Gilbert, you will stay at home, I suppose, till Mr. Claverton goes, and Charlie and Basil will fish. Lord and Lady Luxborough don't come till the evening, as they post from Invergordon."

"I'm not going to dream of fishing to-day, Augusta," said Charlie. "I shall walk with Basil, and see him perform the prodigies people say he does in the West country."

"Don't chaff, old fellow; I can't bear it; but I'm all ready. I don't think there's any such pleasure in life

as the first hour on a good river on a favourable day, and I don't think that I can fail to kill a fish to-day."

"Don't boast, Mr. St. John, or you will get none. If the fish won't rise, fish for pearls; that has been more profitable of late," exclaimed Evelyn.

"If I did, I'm afraid it would be a long time before you got a necklace," answered Basil, laughing.

"Well," said Lady Frankland, "some day we will teach him, if the weather keeps dry and the river is low enough. Evelyn, you and I will drive over and get Susan Mackenzie and her aunt to dine here one day soon. Crimp me a fish if you get one, Basil."



CHAPTER IV.

A HOME IN THE HIGHLANDS.

“O saw ye bonnie Lesley,
As she gae'd o'er the border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther.

“To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever,
For Nature made her what she is,
And ne'er made sic another.”

BURNS.

WE must now turn our attention to the heiress, who has been already alluded to, Miss Susan Mackenzie of Achmelvich Castle, a personage who fills a considerable place in this history; and to do this with justice, we will describe her house and its neighbourhood.

The Castle had for several hundred years been in possession of the Mackenzies, and though the days had long passed away when the Mackenzie clan reigned all-powerfully in the Western Highlands—and many a ruined castle could be shown, telling a tale of war and rapine—still through all those days of executions and

attainders, this branch of the family had lived quietly enough, and, thanks to having so lived, could now show good lands and possessions, where those of their kinsmen had wasted away, and ruins only told of the grandeur of days gone by.

Achmelvich Castle was a good strong-built mansion, with those numberless little turrets and pepper-boxes peculiar to Scotch architecture. It stood quite on the brink of Loch Cannisp, a fair inland loch, some ten miles long, into which ran a good salmon river, which ran out at the other end to the sea, all belonging to the property. The grand gneiss mountain flanked one side of it, and came perpendicularly down to the water's edge; while on the other side ran the main road, which had wound its way between the wild Ross-shire and Sutherlandshire mountains till it came to the loch, where the land became less rocky; and a fine strath opened to the west, covered with bracken, heather, and furze; beyond that the plentiful growth of cotton grass showed the morass-like nature of the ground. Here and there stacks of peat were to be seen, piled in small heaps to dry, before being carried away to the cottages as fuel for the long winter nights. On the higher ground patches of corn and plots of potatoes, blackened with the now prevailing disease, caught the eye.

In the distance stood the manse, the kirk, a tiny inn, and a few hovels. The Castle lay near the road, and quite close down on the water's edge. In the olden days that close proximity to the loch had been of no slight advantage. Often, when hotly pursued by the Clan Chattan, or other hostile clan, had a chieftain escaped in his boat across the water, and now, in place of moat and drawbridge, a smooth lawn lay on the side of the house facing the loch; on another was a good walled garden, divided by old-fashioned walks edged with box, and *espalier* apple-trees on either side. A door opened through the wall, leading with steps down to the loch, where a boat lay moored. The old-fashioned garden abounded in fruit-trees, with here and there a seat underneath; and in the centre of the walk was a sundial, probably placed there in the days when they were first known in Scotland. Immediately under the windows lay Susan Mackenzie's favourite border of flowers, with plenty of mignonette, pinks, and jessamine, which bloomed abundantly long after the heiress and her household had gone south; and in November even the old gardener would often pick a handful of flowers to take to the minister's wife at the manse. The lower end of the garden was devoted to gooseberry-bushes, which somehow or other always seem to cling especially

to Scotch gardens; and beyond that was the drying-ground, after which you came to a sort of wild shrubbery, where narrow paths wandered in and out amongst the larch plantations, with steep ascents, surrounded on both sides by thick brushwood. Now and then you might put up a black-cock, or in the most secluded parts perhaps see a roe-buck disappear in the thickest of the wood. The paths went on ascending and winding, till, at the summit of the hill, you found a rough seat and a small cairn. It was a most exquisite view which there met the eye. Far away to the west, over the sea, was seen the distant outline of Harris and Lewis; to the east rose the grand Sutherlandshire hills, with their quaint outlines; south lay the richer, softer shapes of Ross-shire; while immediately below your feet was the beautiful loch, now calm as a mill-pond, and here and there skimmed by a sea-gull, or hardly disturbed by the flock of wild fowl resting on its waters, and which alone gave life to the scene. The ground was thickly covered with luxuriant heather, growing down to the water's edge, and almost meeting the sea-weed. A more beautiful spot could hardly be found, and once seen, it was a picture of which the recollection could not die, but would rise again and again in the mind's eye as one of the most lovely

pictures on which the eye could rest, even when one was miles and miles away.

And so thought the girl who was sitting on the bench, with her head resting pensively on one hand, while the other was idly stroking the head of a large black retriever, evidently thinking but little of the handsome animal that stood half-mesmerized by her caress. Susan Mackenzie—for she it was—was tall, with a full and well-formed figure, dark-brown hair, and a clear complexion, with very deep-blue eyes; her nose was short and slightly bridged; and her mouth, which was large and very well cut, indicated a decision which a very square chin did not contradict. She was a strikingly handsome girl, and looked very well at that moment in a skirt of Mackenzie tartan, a dark and rather close-fitting jacket, and a small hat, with the “Caber Fe,” or badge of the Mackenzie clan fastened in front. Now, having described her outward appearance, we will stand by her, and watch her face a while, and see what we can make out from it. The prevailing expression was one of great sweetness and firmness, combined in a remarkable degree for a face of not more than twenty-one summers. It may be that the expression could be accounted for by the circumstances of her education. Susan Mackenzie had been left an orphan at ten years old, heiress to a very

fine property, of between £7000 or £8000 a year. Her guardians had been appointed by her mother, who had the sole charge of her during the few years she had survived her husband—Susan having lost her father when she was a year old.

The guardians her mother had appointed were her sister, Lady Charlotte Mackenzie, a widow, who had also married a Mackenzie, and a Sir John Herbert, who had a large family of his own, and who, soon after he had been appointed guardian, had been called by his profession to India, so that the whole responsibility rested upon Lady Charlotte, who had had the entire bringing up of Susan; and as she was one of the most original-minded women one could meet, her ward, who had shown at ten years old a very decided will of her own, had grown up also peculiar in her ways and proceedings.

And now we must not linger longer on the top of the hill, lovely as it is, but follow the heiress as she proceeds rather slowly down the steep narrow path cut in the heather. There was a somewhat sad expression in her face, which changed to rather a cynical smile, as she said, half-aloud, "If I only could think any one but Aunt Charlotte and the dog cared for me myself, and not for all the things that belong to me. How I envy

that Evelyn Moncrieff whom Lady Frankland has with her; everybody likes her for herself." And perhaps if we could have seen the two letters that Miss Mackenzie had in her pocket we could understand the thought. They were proposals for the honour of her hand, the writers being in both cases, of course, "far beyond all sordid or mercenary views,"—the one the third son of a very worthless Leicestershire squire, and the other a penniless Irish peer; both without possessions of any kind, save that of a very indifferent character.

"Well," said Susan, "it's no use thinking about it; what can't be cured must be endured; only, if I could find any one to take care of me, so as not to feel so very lonely and desolate sometimes. But now I must go to Aunt Charlotte. I daresay she has made some wonderful arrangement which must be attended to directly; so off we go, Brock, old fellow!" and she ran lightly down the paths, till she came to the kitchen garden gate, which she opened, and ran on quickly up the steps which led to the back entrance of the house. She paused for a moment when she reached the drawing-room door, and half smiled as she heard her aunt's voice saying, "Then, White, I think the best plan will be for you to take the green room curtains and alter them to be put in the two new bachelors' rooms; you can easily make

them do, can't you ? Ask Miss Mackenzie if she approves of our plans."

"Miss Mackenzie approves of everything you will take the trouble to arrange, dear," said the young lady, coming behind her aunt, and laying her hand on her shoulder, and kissing her.

"But, my dear, I wish you to care, and give all these orders ; and, do you know, White has been telling me that the garden boy has twice been seen by the housekeeper talking in at the scullery window to the kitchen-maid, and she doesn't think it ought to go on ; of course, if they are engaged it's a different thing, but still, they are very young, and it's very imprudent, I think, if they are ; and I really think you, my dear, as mistress of the house, might speak to them."

"Dear Aunt Charlotte, indeed I can do no such thing ; why, they would laugh in my face. Donald is seven teen ; and I should think the young lady was much the same age. I think myself they were probably talking about cabbages and onions, and not of love ; not that I think there would be much harm if they did," and she sighed.

"La, Miss Mackenzie," said White, who had been listening to this conversation, and who completely shared her mistress's ideas ; "pray don't let any of

the young ones hear you say that; it would be awful. Servants ain't what they used to be when I was young," said the confidential maid as she left the room.

"Now I want to talk to you, dear aunt, about the day we must have our fishing party," and Susan walked to the window, and looked out. Like almost all Scotch houses, the drawing-room was on the first floor, and this one was a low long room, with three windows looking south, and two to the west, one on each side of the fire-place, all of which overlooked the loch. It was furnished with a pretty light chintz, and paper of heather pattern; a piano stood in one corner, and there was a large, pleasant low sofa, and plenty of arm-chairs, besides three or four tables covered with books, drawings, and work. A basket in one corner was full of small soft puppies, the progeny of Susan's favourite Skye terrier. Two or three of Landseer's prints were hung round the room, and a picture of Susan Mackenzie, by Richmond. Altogether it was a thoroughly comfortable room. Susan looked out of the window for some time, and watched the gulls chasing each other backwards and forwards; but she was thinking little of them, though she appeared to be watching them anxiously.

At last she was roused from her reverie by her aunt,

who had been fidgeting about the room for some time, saying to her, "My dear, well, what have you got to say; I hear our neighbours, the Franklands, had an arrival of company last night, and expect more to-day. White tells me that the housekeeper sent up to borrow two baths."

"Well, Aunt Charlotte, I'm very glad, for I suspect that Evelyn Moncrieff found it a little dull, though General Tremaine is so devoted to her. Who is come or coming, do you know?"

"Oh! Mr. Ogle came last week, you know, dear, but then nobody finds out whether he is there or not—out fishing all day long, and asleep all the evening; such a pity too, with such a nice little fortune as he has, for I think he came into his uncle's money. The new people are, I believe, Lord and Lady Luxborough, and a daughter, Miss Hinton; Mr. St. John, that man we heard so much about last season—don't you remember, he did not care about going out, and abused it all, and still went everywhere?—he is Lady Frankland's brother, and the other man is Mr. Charles Hay, her cousin—you remember him, don't you? I'm sure I do; such hours as I waited for his cousin, Miss Hay, till she was ready to leave Lady Winchfield's ball, when he was dancing the cotillon with her. Don't you remember,

it was the day you wore that mauve gown with white flowers?"

"No, indeed I don't, dear aunt; but we are sure to see these new guests of the Franklands before long; as, if the weather holds fine, I promised to console them by letting them net the Dyke Pool on the Cannisp. They are sure to get some fish; and it's a great treat to the gillies and people, and does the river good rather than harm once in the year."

"But, my dear child, did you think of telling Mrs. Gould that luncheon would be wanted for all this party? I really can't think that you did, for she did not allude to it to me this morning, when I saw her for a few minutes to ask what was the meaning of Helen Munro's having brought that great lazy girl of hers home, and letting her be idle about the place for ever."

"I did tell Mrs. Gould that we should want luncheon for some twenty guests, and about as many gillies, and I even was prudent enough to say that the whisky for these latter must be limited—more than you gave me credit for. Let me see, this is Monday, and I named the middle of next week, but Evelyn Moncrieff was to let me know about it. Twelve o'clock, she was to come soon after. I think I see the pony-carriage in the far distance. Yes, it is she," she said.

looking through the field-glasses which lay on the table. "I'll go and meet her."

"My dear Susan, I did want you so much to settle what I was to wear at Miss Trevelyan's wedding," said Lady Charlotte.

"Oh, really, Aunt Charlotte, that cannot matter yet. You might as well want to settle what you will wear at my wedding," said Susan, laughing.

"Well, Susan, I'm sure I wish I could see you settled with all my heart."

"Ah! that day won't come yet awhile, if it ever does, which I doubt," said the young girl, as she turned from the window and walked out of the room, saying, "I shall come back in time for luncheon."

CHAPTER V.

FISHING EXTRAORDINARY.

“ **ORT** have I seen the skilful angler try
The various colours of the treacherous fly,
When he with fruitless pain had skinm'd the brook
And the coy fish rejects the skipping hook.

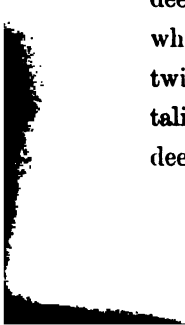
“ You must not every worm promiscuous use ;
Judgment will tell the proper bait to choose.”

GAY's Rural Sports.

It was about three o'clock on the afternoon of the same day, that the clouds having lifted off the hills, the sun shone brightly on the deep black pools of the Cannisp. This lovely little river was a great favourite with all who had once made its acquaintance. It delighted alike fishermen and lovers of fine scenery. Its course was a short one, rising in a loch at the foot of one of the highest mountains ; its whole length was not more than from three to four miles. It fell rapidly, and in one place had really a considerable fall, high enough to stay the course of the salmon up the river. To ride to the falls made a nice excursion from the lodge, and often the young ladies would come over and watch

the fishing, and then go and prepare luncheon at the fall pool, where was a grand slab of limestone-rock that seemed made on purpose for a table, and which was ever ready for these improvised banquets.

The river itself, though so short in its course, presented a very great variety of scenery. Here it ran in a deeply cut gorge, while the overhanging rocks nearly met overhead, and masses of beautiful ferns seemed to grow out of the rock itself; places that made one wonder how the sportsman contrived to follow his fish along that pathless cliff. A little lower, and the most lovely valley was seen, the river winding like a silver ribbon through the low boggy lands, with a distant view of the bay and its little islands. Again, in another part, the banks of low hills were covered on one side by nut, birch, and small fir trees; while on the other the rich heather grew luxuriantly, with here and there a grey lichen-covered rock cropping out. It was a lovely place to sit and watch the clouds chasing each other across the deep blue sky. Now and then the roe-deer were to be seen in the woods on the other side, which were seldom or never disturbed; and once or twice the eager sportsman, while fishing, had been tantalized beyond description by the sight of a noble red deer on the opposite bank, browsing quietly, all un-



conscious of the nearness of a human being. The fisherman determined to bring his rifle for the future, and for several days did so, but the wind had changed, and the red deer came no more.

The sun shines very brightly at the moment we arrive by the river's side, and there find our two young men lying full length on the heather. The remains of the luncheon were being consumed by Duncan Munro, who was sitting at a little distance eyeing them with a half-cynical expression on his hard weather-worn face. Perhaps he was contrasting his own appearance, which was rather like a scarecrow, with that of his young masters' *pro tem.*, as they lay there, the picture of manly grace and health; in their gray shooting-clothes hardly to be distinguished at a little distance from the rocks on which they lay reclined. The fishing-rods were placed carefully at a little distance, and the favourite flies were stuck in their hats. By Basil's side was a small sketch-book, for, *faute de sport*, he had been trying to draw the view before him, and had made a somewhat prosaic, but not unfaithful representation of the scene. It was nature with the poetry left out, as Charles Hay informed him on looking over his shoulder.

"Well," said Basil at last, after about five minutes,

pause, during which Charles had been diligently mending bits of line and so forth ; " we might as well throw our hats in, Charlie, as flies, with this sun on the water, and this wind and low state of the river. It's rather thick too ; I've tried all the likely-looking places, and with such flies as no well-disposed fish ought to resist ; and it's no mortal use. What do you say, Duncan ? "

" Why, I say, sir, that it would be just as well if you were up at the lodge, playing that fine new music thing Milady has brought down there, as fishing here to-day. It is just a waste of time ; unless, indeed, you would be liking to try the brown fly," and his eye twinkled.

" The brown fly ! " said Basil ; " why, I've tried every kind and sort, and every colour in the rainbow, and the brutes won't rise."

" Ay, but my fly is not one you young gentlemen would use, I expect. Ask the General ; maybe he will not like to confess how often he has used it himself, though," said Duncan.

" Well then, show us this wonderful insect, Master Duncan," said Charlie, laughing heartily at the man's voice and manner. " Can you give us one ? "

" Ay, you'll get that ; you just bide here a little while I rig up a bit of tackle," and so saying the old

gillie arose and proceeded to dive into his dirty capacious pockets, and brought out some common eel-hooks, which he soon bound on fast to a piece of gut; then walked away to rather a soft, muddy-looking piece of ground, and proceeded to dig therein with his pocket-knife.

"What is the old fellow about?" said Basil; "anyhow, I'll bet you anything you like we shan't get a fish."

"I don't suppose we shall; especially if such a mag-nate as you are in the fishing line says we shan't. But here he comes."

"May I take your rod, Mr. St. John?" said old Duncan, as he came near them.

"Yes; but mind what you are about with it, for that is my favourite amongst all my rods,—one of Forest's."

Duncan Munro then proceeded to fix his very odd-looking tackle on to Basil's casting-line, and then he turned round with a grin, saying, "And now for old Duncan's brown fly;" and he produced half-a-dozen worms from his pocket, and proceeded to tie them in a largish bunch on his hooks, leading the line pretty heavily, and then said, in a tone of great triumph, "Now, sirs."

"Duncan, Duncan, you old rascal," said Basil, as he sat and laughed heartily on the bank; "how dare you

poach like that ? It's a scandalous shame. What do you think of this, Charlie ?"

"Why, I think the General a dreadful old sinner to have taught him," he answered.

"The General teach me ! why, Mr. Hay, I've known this trick many a long day before ever I saw the General. And now, see, we will just try the tail of this pool, where the shadow of the rocks and trees has begun to fall. It's not often I have failed to get a fish here. Shall either of you gentlemen be pleased to try ?"

"Not I," answered Basil ; "you must work such pouching by yourself. It's bad enough to connive at it."

"Off she goes then," said Duncan, as he threw the well-leaded line over to the other side of the river, and dragged it slowly back along the bottom.

"No success, Duncan."

"Bide a wee, Mr. Hay ; we've not done yet."

Sure enough, at the second throw a good tug was felt ; and as they saw the momentary tightening of the line, the two young men, who with all their feigned indifference were watching anxiously, both jumped up as if shot. However, it was only a bite, and this time also the line came back slack. A few minutes' pause, just enough to let the water settle, and give the fish time, and again the line flew across the water. The fish now

took the bait greedily, and then each of the young men eagerly seized a gaff, and Charlie jumped on to a rock projecting some way into the water, prepared to strike the fish the moment he got the chance. The other gillie, a boy of sixteen, who had been lying lazily in the heather, playing the Jew's-harp—a favourite amusement with the poor in that part of Scotland,—also rushed to the water's edge in great excitement.

“Will you be for taking the rod, sir?” said Duncan to Basil.

“No, no; I'll leave the whole business to you,” he answered. “But mind what you are about; that's a good fish, I'm sure.”

“All right, sir! I daresay it's a fourteen-pound fish. I just saw the back, and it was a good wide one.”

Whilst he was saying this Duncan was playing the fish uncommonly well, now slacking and now reeling in the line, and running a little way when the fish made desperate bounds to the end of the pool.

“I'll tell you what,” said Charlie; “Duncan will be in a fix if the fish bolts out of this pool; he will hardly be able to follow in the rapids below; but he seems to know what he's about.”

“The fish never leave this pool, sir,” said the other gillie, Sandy, who had heard this observation.

"Basil, look how well he is playing that fish," said Charlie, roused to enthusiasm.

"Yes, indeed," said Basil; "cunning old dog. I daresay it's many a good salmon is turned by him into a kipper before any one from the lodge is down here in the morning. But the fish is tired out; now for a good gaff," and so saying, he leant forward to strike the fish; but no, another rush, and it was at the other side of the pool. One or two more attempts, and he succeeded, and the fish lay bleeding and beating on the river bank. "By Jove, what a beauty! a fine thick young fish as ever I saw. Give me my scales, Sandy," and having administered a *coup-de-grace* Basil lifted the fish with his steelyard. "Nineteen pounds and a half, and as beautiful a clean run fish as I could wish to see. Shall we crimp it for Milady?" cried he. "O no, it's really a pity. Won't Ogle be furious when he sees this?"

"You will be keeping it dark about the brown fly, I suppose, gentlemen?" said Duncan, leering at them. "Shall we try again? I daresay in half an hour the pool would be rested."

"O no, no; once is all very well, Master Duncan, but we don't want to become regular poachers."

"Ah! there's many a fish caught this way, and never

a word said about it, Mr. St. John; and now, shall I put the rods up?"

"Yes; we may as well be off, mayn't we, Charlie? I want to go home in a straighter line than we came by. It's full early; are you for a walk home across the hills?"

"O yes, certainly," answered Charles Hay; "nobody will want us back at the lodge at half-past three, and it's really lovely now. We shan't want these fellows, shall we?"

"No, we shall do very well without them. Stay, I'll have my sherry flask, Duncan. I daresay we shall be glad of it before we get home," said Basil.

"Mind you'll not be losing your way, sir, and getting into the meikle swamp," said Duncan. "It's about four miles straight home, and you must go by the edge of the Mackenzie land all the way till you come to the dry-stane dyke, and then straight as you can go north, and when you see the lodge to the east, make for it."

"Very well, Duncan; mind Lady Frankland sees the fish."

"And Miss Moncrieff too," added Duncan. "Ay, she's a bonnie young leddy. Many a time has she gone down to sit with my poor sister Elspeth since she came here, and I do think the poor cratur' is better for

all her care. Shall I leave the rods at my house, sir, or take them to the lodge?"

"Better leave them down at your house, as we are to have this river, and the General and Mr. Ogle the other. Now, don't stay drinking whisky in the village till sunset, do you hear?"

"Ay, ay, sir; all right."

CHAPTER VI.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

"Pshaw! how his mind wandered; and what was the use of thinking of such matters now, now that he had not twenty-four hours to live, now that he should fix his thoughts on the next world, and pray ardently for the welfare of his soul? Ay, it was well that he had not neglected this duty, and put it off till to-day."

"Might he but have chosen, he would not have died quite like this."

Holmby House.

CHARLES HAY and Basil St. John turned aside from the track by the river side, and began quietly and silently to ascend the hill. It was some time before either spoke. Why they were thus silent perhaps neither could have said, but each was wrapt in his own meditations, and hardly aware of his companion's presence. Suddenly a grouse getting up near their feet startled them from their reveries; and after a few comments on the shooting prospects of the season, Charles began: "These seem famous good quarters of Augusta's, and you seem to be pretty well at home already."

Basil half laughed as he answered, "Yes, I'm afraid it's rather a selfish way I have of looking after myself."

"By the way, Basil, for a shy man, which you pretend to be, you seemed to hit it off uncommonly well with the strange young lady. Who is she, as, beyond the fact of her being Miss Evelyn Moncrieff, I know nothing about her?"

"I don't know much," answered Basil; "but I did hear Augusta say, when she first went to live at Hawsdon, that she had found a very nice companion in a Miss Moncrieff, an orphan, living with an old aunt or cousin, and very ill off; but somehow, as I never have been able to go to their place, I never met this girl or thought of her again till I found myself sitting by her at breakfast. She is, I think, very easy to get on with; a nice, good expression, one of the best countenances I ever saw, though by no means a decided beauty; and she's a lovely figure, and the neatest feet and ankles I ever saw in a woman of her size."

"Why, man, I never heard you say as much in any girl's favour before! Are you quite sure now that you really meant it all; and that you didn't think she was determined to marry you?" answered his cousin.

"Don't chaff, Charlie; you know I hate it. Miss Moncrieff is a very good sort, I daresay; but you know I must marry a girl with some money, or I wonder what would happen to her if I died. I couldn't settle a shil-

ling; it's all tied up as tight as nails. I've only a life interest in the little I have; and as for anything more, it just depends on my grandfather's fancies."

"Well, for once in my life, I'm glad I have my pittance instead; it's about a quarter what you have, but it's in my power. And perhaps, when I have worked a good bit at my profession, I may have saved a little money, and be able to marry by custom. My life *en attendant vogue la galère*. As for heiress-hunting, I never did it, and never mean to do it. I think it's about the meanest thing a man can do. Why, just look at the opinion people have of Creepy Quick, in our office. The sort of way that man has of pushing himself on the world, and making up to every girl, no matter who, who is supposed to have money, is,—but bah, it's disgusting, and we won't talk of such things now. Look, Basil, what a view! By George! I'm rather blown. Your legs get over the ground quicker than mine. We've come a good step; look back."

"That is always an excuse for getting a little breath, Charlie, to stop and admire the scenery; but, without being easily pleased, I admit it is quite lovely," said Basil, as he looked across the valley. The panorama before him was not a bird's-eye view, which seldom can be a beautiful thing, however extensive, but swept far

away only in one direction, as they had not reached the summit of the hill they were ascending. It presented a charming variety of wood, river, lake, and glimpses of the distant sea, like a silver line in the horizon. Basil continued—

“I suppose the ‘dry-stane dyke’ he talked of is farther on. I think down there I see something of the lodge; and that must be Achmelvich Castle and Loch Cannisp, I suppose. Well, we were to follow the Mackenzie boundaries; and, though I don’t quite see what they are, I think we are in the right direction. I wonder what sort of a girl this heiress is; Miss Moncrieff would not tell me. I should think she was rather an independent young woman, with a good idea of having her own way. Ogle tells me she has a beautiful lot of horses in her stables, and is uncommonly fond of driving, and of her dogs, and of that kind of thing; but there’s no harm in that; one could not expect much of Lady Charlotte Mackenzie’s bringing up.”

“Now, Basil, attend to where you are going, instead of prosing so. You are used to Scotland: which way are we to go? for what with old Duncan’s easts and wests, I feel rather doubtful.”

“Oh, I’ll be shot if I’m going up amongst all those rocks and stones! That ground down there looks very

jolly and level; let's go down there, it can't make half-a-mile difference. We have walked a good three miles, I should think," answered Basil.

"I don't pretend to know," said Charlie. "We've got very near the Castle; it can't be more than half-a-mile or so now. I can see all the windows plainly. What an odd-looking old place, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is; but picturesque. I like those little pepper-box turrets. She has about £8000 a year, hasn't she? Too much of an heiress; who would venture to make up to her?"

"Bob Thompson did, I can tell you. He left no stone unturned; and the fellows at White's used to say that the first thing she did every morning, was to write a note and decline the honour of Bob's alliance."

"Why, Charlie, you never told me you knew Miss Mackenzie."

"I only met her once at the opera, or some ball. My mother knows Lady Charlotte; and she just introduced me to her niece. She was very agreeable; with such splendid brown eyes and hair."

"Then I'm sure I should not admire her. I never could like a dark woman. Hallo, though, this is getting rather soft going, as Gilbert would say; let's get on to that grassy part." And so saying, Basil stepped down

to some lower ground, which, to all appearance, was smooth, fine grass ; and, preceding Charlie by a few yards, he walked on. He had not gone more than a few steps before he sank rapidly up to his knees, and could only call out to his companion, "Charlie, take care ; don't come here, whatever you do. It's a bog ; and I'm up to my knees. Keep well in the heather. How I'm to get out I can't think : if I struggle I shall be safe to go in deeper ;" and even as he spoke he sank and sank.

Charlie, as he stood at the edge of the swamp, at first laughed, but now he began to be rather alarmed, as he saw Basil sinking further in, and felt that he was there alone, and utterly powerless to help him in any way.

"Can you lie down flat, Basil ?" said he ; "that's the best thing, I believe. What fools we were to come without Duncan. The Castle doesn't look half-a-mile ; I think I could get help, if you can bear up somehow."

"Yes, Charlie, run. I think I could keep still for a good bit, and while we have been speaking I've only sunk four or five inches."

"I'll go like the wind, my dear old Basil, if I only could do anything," and the tears almost stood in poor Charlie's eyes.

"Run away, old fellow ; God bless you. If I do get

swallowed up before you return, my love to the sisters and my grandfather; they and you are all that will really regret me; that's a comfort now. Well, it's a good thing I've not got the wife I have so often dreamt of," he said to himself, as he watched Charlie's rapidly receding figure flying over the rough ground that half-an-hour before had seemed so impracticable. The moments passed very slowly; it seemed many hours to Basil, and he had sunk up to his arm-pits; it seemed the most horrible death to die. But he felt very calm and peaceful, and was quite resigned to what he thought was his inevitable fate. He could do nothing, and could only in these few minutes look back through his life, with a short fervent prayer. And it was no new thing for Basil to pray for forgiveness for all his sins. Bitterly did he regret some moments in his life. It all seemed to come before him so distinctly in that agony of suspense. The temptation yielded to; the folly of the misspent hour, which when over had ever brought the feeling of satiety and disappointment: he could see the sin of it all now, and again he prayed earnestly that this past might be forgiven. *It was no new thing for him to pray*; he had ever done so from his childhood, and now he felt the comfort of it.

He looked up and around him; life and nature

seemed very bright to some, he knew ; but he did not feel, young though he was, as if he had much to regret, and he was glad of it. Suddenly he saw, as his eyes were strained in Charlie's direction, two or three figures running rapidly towards him, carrying something between them on their shoulders. Swiftly they passed Charlie without stopping, and he joined them and kept on running towards the swamp.

"Help, and help that would come in time," thought Basil, and breathed a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving. He had all the time kept his arms up, and now he could distinctly hear Charlie's voice calling—"Keep up, Basil ; please God, we will save you." Nearer and nearer they came, and Basil saw they had planks between them and thick ropes. The stalwart Highlanders came on and threw their burden down. Swiftly then one of them threw a loop to Basil, which he was just able to seize with his hands. He was now nearly up to his chin. Charlie meanwhile had sunk breathless on a stone, with the perspiration streaming down his blanched and terrified face, watching eagerly every movement of the men. Basil was too far in to be pulled out by the rope held in this way. What could be done ! Every moment was precious, as Basil was getting quite exhausted.

Suddenly one of the men, who was evidently the head-keeper, laid down two of the planks, side by side, a little apart ; and the lightest of the men crawled along these planks thus laid on the swamp ; then two more planks were pushed towards him, and these in turn he pushed forward, and placed them in the same way, so as to divide the pressure as much as possible. He crawled along them, and said to Basil, who was now getting to feel very faint, " Now, sir, wait a moment till I can get hold of your hand, and then try and slip the loop under your arm-pits ; but do it gently, and lean backwards as much as you can." After some trouble Basil did as the man told him. " Now, the other hand, sir," and the long delicate fingers were clasped in the hard brown horn of the keeper's hand. " Now, men, pull steadily when I say *one*. Here goes—*one*," and Basil was pulled forward almost on to his face. Again and again they pulled, and he was soon a good deal lifted out of the bog, which, however, was not easily disposed to lose its prey, and gave a sucking and swishing sort of sound at every haul.

" Lean back well, sir, and try and turn round, if you can, that we may not throw you on your face."

Three more hauls, and Basil was able to crawl on to the planks, and be pulled on to the firm rocky ground.

“My dear, dear, old fellow,” almost sobbed Charles as he knelt down by Basil; but the latter had fainted from the exhaustion and tension of the nerves, and heard him not. He was safe, however, and that was all Charles cared for.

“Give me the sherry, and lift him up, and let’s try and rouse him.”

Covered with bog-earth from head to foot, and lying there amongst these rough Highlanders, Basil’s pale and delicate features formed a strange contrast. One of them threw some water in his face, and another rubbed his hands.

Presently Basil opened his eyes; just recognised Charlie; put out his hand towards him, and was again nearly gone.

He rallied, however, in a few minutes, and was able to swallow some of the sherry Charlie held to his mouth. “It was a very near go, old fellow,” he said, “but I’m getting all right now. What are we to do all this way from the lodge?”

“If you please, sirs, my lady said we were to take you straight back to the lodge. Sandy can carry the gentleman.”

“Carry me!” laughed Basil; “Sandy would die no other death. No, wait a few minutes, and I can get on.”

"But you will not go to Glen Cannisp. I was to be sure to take you to the Castle" persisted the man.

"Well, to say the truth, I don't think I could walk as far as that. What shall we do, Charlie?" replied Basil.

"Why, accept, and be thankful for Lady Charlotte Mackenzie's kind offer; for she is Milady, I suppose. Now lean on me, my dear old fellow," he whispered, as he put out his arm to Basil. "Thank God you are safe, and may I never endure the misery I did while running to Achmelvich."

"Thank you, dear Charlie," was all Basil said, as he gripped his cousin's hand tightly, and they got under weigh.

CHAPTER VII.

HOSPITALITY.

"A man is never welcome to a place till his hostess say,
Welcome."

SHAKESPEARE.

"My dear, my dear Susan, you have told them to have the green and the red room ready, I hope?"

"Yes, Aunt Charlotte, I have—if any one ever comes from that fearful swamp alive," answered Susan Mackenzie, as she rapidly paced the room. "Who could have sent any human being there?" and she turned to the telescope fixed in the window and looked through it, motionless for some minutes. At last she said, "Oh, aunt, I can see the keepers now by the side of the swamp, and, thank God, they seem to have come in time. Well," she added, after a pause, "science is worth something after all, when it enables you to see the dangers of people a mile off, and save their lives."

"My dear, that moss is not more than three quarters of a mile, I think," said Lady Charlotte Mackenzie.

"I wonder who it can be," said Susan, whose eye

never left the glass, "but they are indeed saved; and if it had not been for my looking through this half-an-hour ago, that man must have died. Now they are moving slowly away. I see it's no use sending the carriage; I'll send the ponies," she added, and ran out of the room.

Half-an-hour later she was standing at the bottom of the garden steps to receive her strange-looking guests, and started as they drew nearer to recognise Charles Hay as an acquaintance, dirty and hot as he was. He said, as he took off his hat, in a very earnest way, "Miss Mackenzie, you have done me the greatest kindness you could possibly have done, in saving the life of my cousin and my dearest friend, Basil St. John, whom you must let me introduce to you; and don't judge him by his present appearance, pray." Miss Mackenzie laughed, and stopped Basil, who looked very pale and much exhausted, but who was beginning to try to thank her.

"Not a word now," she said quickly; "you must go straight in, Mr. St. John, and go to bed, and I hope if you feel equal to it you will join us at dinner; if not, stay in your room, just as you feel inclined. Most thankful am I to have seen you attempt to cross that bog. It is marvellous that you escaped; few have returned to

life who ever set foot on that fatal place ; but come, for Aunt Charlotte says you must go to bed."

"You are very good, Miss Mackenzie," said Basil, who was a little surprised by her firm, decided manner ; "but, Charlie, I think we ought to get back if possible ; and really I am up to it now, if Miss Mackenzie will allow me to dry myself a little."

"You shall not go, indeed," she answered ; "it would be utter folly. I will send a note to Lady Frankland, which you can indorse if you will. Mr. Hay, you will stay here at any rate, and your cousin can't go home alone ; and besides, I won't lend him anything to take him back on or in—so that's settled."

Charles Hay blushed, as he said he thought he ought to go home at all events. Susan Mackenzie turned round sharply, and began, "You must," and then stopped, and added : "I think it would be unkind alike to Mr. St. John and to us to go away ; but stand here and talk to you in your wet things I cannot," and so saying she turned and went slowly up the steps, looking round now and then to see how Basil got on ; and leading the way through a narrow box-edged walk, she got into the house, went up a staircase and down a long barrack-like passage, pushed open a door at the end, and, looking round to see if all was quite right, she met her

guests at the door and said, "Now, please go to bed; we dine at half-past seven, and it's five now. I know there is some good hot mess ready for you, for Aunt Charlotte has been at work at it for half-an-hour; she will be surprised when she hears who you are. Good-bye; don't think me very independent, please. I have to do all the honours by myself," and she sighed as she shut the door.

"Now, into bed, Basil, this moment. How you shiver! By Jove! that fire is pleasant. I'll get those boots off, they'll not be of much use for some days to come, I'm afraid," and Charlie soon helped Basil off with all the muddy clothes, and in two minutes had wrapped him entirely up in the blankets he had dragged off the bed, and tucked him up on the sofa in front of the fire, for Basil stoutly declined getting into the bed.

"Hallo, who's there? come in—no, that's to say stay there," said Charlie, laughing at the state of *déshabille* in which Basil had jumped up on hearing him say, "Come in."

"It's only me," said a woman's voice.

"Who's me, I wonder," said Charlie to Basil, and he opened the door a little, to see, to his horror, Lady Charlotte Mackenzie and the butler standing there, the

latter with a tray covered with basins and bottles neatly arranged on a cloth.

"Oh, you must not mind an old woman," said Lady Charlotte, coming into the room—Basil here retreated entirely under his blanket,—“I’m Susan Mackenzie’s aunt, and she has told me who you are. Now, Mr. St. John, you must take this directly, and that in ten minutes; it will keep hot on the hob, and then sleep till dinner time, and then—oh, goodness, what’s to be done about clothes for you! what shall we do, Jones?”

"There’s my new things, Milady; but really you know," and as Charlie looked at Jones he had some difficulty to help laughing, for the good old man was the picture of an old English butler—a short stout-looking man, weighing a good sixteen stone, and wide in proportion.

"No; I’m afraid Jones’s things won’t do. Let me think," said her Ladyship; "I know there are some of my poor father’s things, that he had before he married, put away on the top shelf of my dressing-room wardrobe. Jones, just go and ask Rebecca to get the keys."

"But, indeed, Lady Charlotte, I’m afraid things of that date would hardly do to wear now," said Basil, with his head just appearing above the blankets; "but, perhaps, as there are two hours till dinner, you would


allow whoever takes the note to my sister, to bring us back some togs—I mean some clothes,” he said, laughing.

“That will do beautifully; come away, Mr. Hay, and write the note; your room is next door; and the man will come for it in ten minutes.”

A few minutes before the dinner-bell rang, Basil was standing in Miss Mackenzie's drawing-room, examining carefully the chalk drawing of her over the piano. It was decidedly a clever face, he thought, with much mind and power in the rather large, full mouth and broad forehead; but she was too dark to suit his taste, and her manner too decided to be attractive to him. He felt very weak and much tired after his long and exciting day, and did not perhaps see life from a very cheerful point of view. He had been reflecting for two hours on life and its vicissitudes. He went up to the telescope in the window, and sighed, as he said to himself, “Ah, well, but for that I should have been a dead man now, I suppose, and where should I have been?” and he passed his hand across his forehead, and leant his head on the telescope. “This rotten life of mine! no use to any human being, not doing the smallest possible good. If I had a profession, even, I should have some duties, or some one to live for; or if my

grandfather would give me money enough to start farming. How I do envy Charlie, so bright and light-hearted, and earnest about all that he does! That was a nice pleasant soul, that girl of this morning. I wonder whether she would ever care at all about me. What nonsense! she hasn't a shilling, and besides—" but here his speculations were interrupted by Miss Mackenzie, who came into the room, preceded by a retriever, a pug, and a fox-terrier, her special favourites, without which she seldom moved. She looked decidedly handsome, as she moved gracefully across the room to where Basil was standing. She was dressed in a white gown of some soft transparent material, which came up to her throat, and through which her fine shoulders and figure still showed to great advantage. Her hair was slightly turned off her temples, and rolled into a great loop behind her head, and fastened with large silver pins, such as the Tyrolese peasants wear.

She looked extremely noble as she turned towards Basil, and said, "Welcome now to Achmelvich. I'm so thankful that you are safe here, Mr. St. John, such dreadful accidents have happened in that morass. It is one of the very worst in the North country. But tell me, who could have been so mad as to let you go that way? it is quite unpardonable."



"It is nobody's fault but my own, Miss Mackenzie. I would try, like a regular Englishman, and also like myself, I'm afraid, to make some improvements upon the road pointed out to me; and most thankful I am to you for having, under God, saved my life. Your butler told me how you had seen us through this glass. I cannot thank you. I'm a bad hand at putting feelings into words; but you will believe me, won't you?" said Basil, in his sweet, gentle voice.

"Please say no more," said Susan, quite moved by his voice and manner; and then she added, after a pause, "Yes, I had been watching for some roe-deer that sometimes come there at that time of day; but till you got to the door I had no notion I was helping acquaintances, for so I consider Mr. Hay. How ill and scared he looked as he came up to the door; though the danger had all passed, terror was still stamped on his usually cheerful face."

"Poor, dear old Charlie! We are the greatest friends, and have been so from childhood. He is the best little fellow in the world; but he is always late for dinner."

Lady Charlotte here bustled in, elaborately attired in amber satin and black lace, her short wiry gray hair arranged in curls on each side of her full round face.

She was full of inquiries as to the effect of her remedies, when the door again opened; dinner was announced, and Charles Hay appeared at the same moment.

"Just in time to take Aunt Charlotte down, Mr. Hay," said Susan, taking Basil's arm as she spoke. "We are quite alone now, but we shall increase our numbers before long, when the shooting begins. The worst of it is that everybody wants to come at once, and they treat one's home somewhat like an hotel. But as long as we have room they are welcome. Lady Frankland has promised that you will all come over and see the pools netted on my little river very soon."

The dinner passed much as one might expect amongst people who had hardly made acquaintance with each other: a little shyness and stiffness at first, which, however, wore off under the influence of Miss Mackenzie's very unaffected, simple, and high-bred manner. Basil was feeling both tired and very languid, and so the conversation lay chiefly between Susan and Charles. Lady Charlotte plied Basil with a combination of food and medical advice, and when the dinner was over, insisted on treating him as an invalid, and establishing him in an arm-chair by the fire, notwithstanding all his assurances that he felt perfectly well. Then she took her knitting, and, having placed herself

opposite to him, sat watching him anxiously till her head began to nod, and she was soon fast asleep ; then Basil, after lazily joining in his cousin's lively conversation with Miss Mackenzie for a few minutes, subsided into a state which, if it was not sleep, was one of rest and comfort and dreaminess, that was equally refreshing.

Miss Mackenzie having sat down to the piano, played gently and well many airs, which she arranged as she went along. Charlie, who was devoted to music, spent a very happy hour leaning over the piano. She talked and played at intervals till near ten, when Lady Charlotte awoke with a start, and declared Mr. St. John must go to bed directly, which he, nothing loath, did at once, and the rest of the party soon followed.

CHAPTER VIII.

BASIL'S LETTER.

“ Time may bring unlook'd-for changes,
Months and years will roll away ;
What in spirit can divide
Or destroy the thoughts of home ? ”

“ THE LODGE, GLEN CANNISF,
July 10th.

“ MY DEAR EDITH, —It is not very easy to find time to write here, but as I know you will expect a letter, I won't let another post pass without writing. I told you in my last letter about my getting bogged, and the heiress's kindness to me. Our party here is remarkably cheerful, and Augusta makes the best and kindest of hostesses. We have had an addition to our numbers since I wrote, Lord and Lady Luxborough, and their girl Miss Hinton. He is a regular country squire, and great on the subject of mangold-wurzel, etc. ; she snubs us all round, but means well, Augusta says ; and the young lady is just like hundreds of others, fair and tall,

and rather awkward, and no sort of style about her. Some odds and ends of men have come also, but often only for a night or two on their way to Stornoway. I will tell you who came the other day, Claude Grey, who is out of health, and must leave his parish for some years.

"I hope you are better of being away from home. Augusta wants to send you a lot of salmon, but I'm sure it won't keep. Tell me if you would like some kippered, and I'll get it done for you. A. is fully occupied with her children, nice little animals, only Gibby takes more to Charles than to me, and calls us both uncles; the baby is pretty, but she probably tells you all that.

"I have done pretty well in the fishing line. The two first days the water was very low and I got none; then the river rose, owing to rain in the hills, and I got three; then five next day, not very heavy fish; then two, then five again, and one a twenty lbs., so I feel what Charlie calls 'beany.' He has done pretty well, but he does not care about it as I do.

"One day we had a luncheon on the river at the falls, and Augusta and Miss Moncrieff came out, and we had a regular pic-nic, just what you would have liked, and Miss Moncrieff caught a trout and cooked it. She is a nice girl, perfectly unaffected, and sings beautifully, and

draws well too. She tells me you have never met. I think her pretty; she has such beautiful hair, eyes, and a perfect figure; not a bit a regulation young lady. I wish you could have seen us. I made a faint attempt at a sketch, and she made a lovely drawing. The heiress dined here one evening, and was very agreeable; she has a quick, decided way of speaking, and I should think would hold her own very well indeed. Her aunt is the queerest old soul you ever met, and the amount of back-stairs gossip she treats us to, is remarkable; I pity Augusta with her after dinner, for the three young ladies make off together always. I wish Miss Moncrieff had some of the Mackenzie money. Our life is charming here. Gilbert gets bored at times, but that he would be anywhere in non-hunting time. He has been much excited by hearing the mastership of the hounds is to change hands. But what a kind creature he is; I should be very glad to see you as comfortably married as Augusta.

“ I’ve been fishing for pearls for you and have got several, but it’s rather rheumatic, break-back work, wading for the mussel-shells, as you have to stoop to see them on the bottom of the river, grub them up, and carry them on shore to open, and great excitement prevails there. I’ll have them made into anything you

like for you. The poor here fish for them a good deal when the water is low. Tell me about my dogs, please. Much love from Augusta to all at home. I've not heard from my grandfather, so I hope he is well. This is a good long letter, and you must not expect to hear again for a bit.--Goodbye. Ever your affectionate brother,

" B. ST. JOHN."

CHAPTER IX.

SOMETHING TO DO.

“ Each morning sees the task begun,
Each evening sees it close ;
Something accomplish'd, something done,
Has earn'd the night's repose.”

LONGFELLOW.

ON the day after Basil had written this letter, at ten o'clock, a very merry party were assembled at breakfast at the lodge, all equipped for an immediate start, and there was much laughing and talking going on about the day's amusement in prospect. They were going to net the Mackenzie salmon pools. Basil only hesitated about whether he could go with them, as it was a splendid fishing morning.

“ Oh, nonsense, Basil! you must come,” said Lady Frankland.

“ Well, Augusta, I don't know; do you really want me?”

“ I don't know what you mean me to answer, but I think you had better come. You ask him, Evelyn,” said her Ladyship.

" Oh, Lady Frankland, Mr. St. John knows I've asked him to come, and I shall say no more."

Basil looked at Evelyn Moncrieff for half a second, coloured a little, and said nothing about the matter then, and merrily they went on.

" Is Gibby to go, Milady?"

" Poor child, he wants to go, but he has a cough; I don't think he's quite well, only I promised Susan Mackenzie," said Lady Frankland.

" There is no use going till eleven, my dear," chimed in Sir Gilbert. " How shall we divide? I will drive the break, and if you, Lady Luxborough, will honour me by coming, and Milady and the child, I think, Luxborough and Tremaine, there will be room for you, and there are saddle-horses for the young ladies."

Lady Luxborough at once put a veto on her daughter's riding, to that damsel's evident annoyance; and so it was settled that Lady Frankland and Evelyn should ride; and at eleven every one was ready. Charlie was standing by the side of Lady Frankland's pony, tightening the girths; and very picturesque and good-looking he appeared, in his brown tweed suit, and a cap of the same colour on his curly hair. Then he turned to Lady Frankland, saying, " Shall I put you up, Augusta?"

" O no; I'm much too heavy, Charlie. I prefer

the safer, but less romantic chair to get up by. Help Evelyn Moncrieff up, if you like."

"I've helped myself, Lady Frankland; thank you," said the girl, as she trotted up to her side. "Why, Mr. St. John, are you coming after all?" she said, as Basil laid his hand on her bridle.

"*Vous l'avez voulu*," said he, looking earnestly at her; "and besides, I've sent Duncan on with my things, so I can fish after the netting is over."

Evelyn said nothing, but felt pleased, though she hardly knew why, to think she should have the influence to make Basil change his mind, which she had already found out was no very easy thing; for with all his endearing and gentle qualities, Basil was a little apt to cling to his own notions and plans, regardless of advice; as also to take up prejudices in favour of or against people, as the case might be. This habit arose from being much listened to at home by his sisters and grandfather, who were all equally devoted to him, and believed there was nothing like him in the world.

Lady Luxborough and Sir Gilbert were comfortably seated in the front of the break, with Lord Luxborough, Miss Hinton, the General, and Gibby behind. Lady Luxborough, who, though really not a bad-hearted

woman, was unfortunately one of those individuals who always think people are going to do something to affront them ; and many a weary hour did she cause her Lord and her daughter by her disagreeable temper. She was only amiable to one person in the world, and he was not now with her, and that was her eldest son ; but with Gerald Hinton no one could fall out.

Lady Luxborough was a tall, handsome woman of about forty-five, and her daughter was gentle and quiet. His Lordship was great on all country topics. Farming, hunting, and shooting--all gave him equal pleasure. He was one of Sir Gilbert's oldest friends, and he enjoyed being with him immensely, when he could escape from his wife's reproaches. She began now :--

"Luxborough, is my grey cloak in the carriage?"

"I'm sure I don't know, my dear. Thomas generally sees to those things, and I saw him put in ever so many wraps."

"Well, but you might as well look."

"I can't get at the cloaks, my love ; they are under the seat."

"But you might as well try. You don't care in the least whether I catch cold or not."

"Lady Luxborough, do look at the light on those

hills ; isn't it beautiful ?" began Sir Gilbert, hoping to change the conversation, and pitying his friend sincerely.

" O yes ; lovely. Hortense, have you sent those letters to the post ?" began her Ladyship again.

" No, mamma ; I did not. I thought there would be plenty of time when we returned ; and that then I could add an account of to-day's party."

" Much better have posted them. If I want a thing done, I suppose I had better do it myself."

Fortunately for the peace of the party, Sir Gilbert here succeeded in attracting Lady Luxborough's attention to a new school, belonging to the Free Kirk, and engaged her in a discussion upon the way in which she managed her schools and parish ; and the rest of the party was left in peace.

They soon passed the riding and walking party, and Lady Luxborough had a slight sneer at idle young men, as they passed Basil walking by the side of Evelyn's pony.

We will linger behind, and listen to their conversation, as more pleasant and peaceful, if not more instructive.

At first neither spoke much, till Miss Moncrieff said, " Is Miss Hay a great ally of yours ? I remember she

talked a good deal of her model cousin one day; do you return the compliment?"

"O dear, no. I'm afraid Charlie is the only one of my belongings I really care for. Ada is not his sister, only his cousin, as well as mine; she is a good sort of girl enough, but lives too much by making up to smart people, to suit me; but I ought not to abuse her. Her home is not a happy one; and no wonder she does the best she can for herself."

"She praised you very much indeed," replied Evelyn; "so much so, that I thought she meant to be Mrs. St. John."

"I don't know what she may have meant," said Basil decidedly, "but it is the very last thing I should ever dream of doing. To me she used always to be talking about the perfect possibility of men and women being very great friends, and nothing more. What do you think on that subject, Miss Moncrieff?"

"It is really impossible for me to say," said Evelyn, with an expression of great amusement on her face; "because, as I have no men friends at all, cousins or others, it never came into my head to consider the subject; but I don't know," she added slowly, "why people should not be great allies, and yet not fall in love with each other, which is, I suppose, what you mean. I

could fancy now being a great friend of Mr. Hay's, and that he would be a true friend, and always the same, so bright and light-hearted, and so honourable in all his ideas."

"What very high praise! But how do you come to judge Charlie so truly, for it is just what he is?"

"Principally," answered Evelyn, "from what you and Lady Frankland have said, and then a little from my own observation. He never seems to think of himself or of any grievances. I think him a very good friend for you, Mr. St. John."

"Why?" he asked, "because I'm always grumbling and growling, I suppose?"

"Not quite that; but because I have noticed that you see things *en noir* very much; and then, forgive me," she said, "but he is so energetic that it makes him wish to stir you up to be very useful and happy. He was talking about you to me at dinner."

"Yes," Basil said; "you are perfectly right. If I only knew how to be of a little use to any one, I should be quite happy. I hate London life, with all its pushing and falseness; but what can I do?"

"You might be very useful in London, if you chose; there are no end of societies for helping the poor, and so on, that would be very thankful to have your spare



time. Oh, believe me, there's plenty to do in the world everywhere. My favourite theory is, 'that it is better to wear out than to rust out.' "

"And you think I am rusting out?" said Basil, rather bitterly.

"Please don't be angry with me," said Evelyn quickly. "I did not presume to say so much; but I feel very much in my own life how useless I am, and wish to do anything I could; and if this is galling to a woman, why, every right-thinking man must feel it still more. Fortunately for themselves, men are not stopped at every corner by conventionalities in the way that women are. You won't think me conventional, though," and she laughed. "But the truth is, Lady Frankland has talked so much about you, that I feel as if I had known you many months."

"I think you very kind, Miss Moncrieff, to take the trouble to advise me at all. But 'concerning rusting out,' as the author of a favourite book of mine would say, are there not already too many pushing on and jostling each other, all bent on self-advancement? Had not some of us better keep in the background?"

"Yes," answered Evelyn, "too many by far, if they are pushing for self-advancement, in the way of society or getting on in the world. But I mean a different

thing altogether. I mean getting one's-self on in mind, and living so that some time, when one looks back at one's life, one may feel that one has not 'rotted away,' to use your cousin's words. I have been sometimes amused at the way in which those who have little energy, and are inclined, from laziness or shyness, to take life very easily, and keep out of sight, back themselves up with all such arguments as they find in books, but which are meant to apply to people of exactly opposite character. That article on 'Pushing on,' for instance, is the sort of excuse they lay hold of. I know, no one better, the intense value of such thoughts; many and many a weary hour have they saved me, and helped me over many a difficulty; but that article I attended to, because two lazy cousins of mine were always quoting it. So I am up on the subject."

"How unlike most girls you are, Miss Moncrieff; few, I should think, have ever troubled their heads on these points," replied Basil.

"Perhaps from living a good deal alone I have had more time to think things out. I never had a friend till I met Lady Frankland, who has been very kind to me ever since she came to live in our part of the world," said Evelyn.

"I wonder whether you would like my other sister,

Edith. She is extremely unlike Augusta; but she is much younger, only twenty one; and Augusta is twenty-eight. How old do you think I am? Don't say, as a young lady said to me the other day, 'Fifty by your face, and fifteen by your conversation.'

Evelyn laughed heartily, and then said, "I don't know,—twenty-three?"

"No, indeed; I'm nearly twenty-six. But here we are, close to Achmelvich Castle. Now, Charlie and Augusta are laughing. I'd give something for his temperament, and to be as sanguine about my life."

"Why you should be otherwise I cannot see; you seem to me to have everything you could wish for,—no one to interfere with you, no one to say you nay in anything."

"That's the worst of it. I wish there was any one who cared a little what I do," sighed Basil.

"Hallo! what are you two looking so awfully solemn about, Basil?" said Charlie, as they came within ear-shot.

"None of your chaff. We are discussing your sins," called out Basil.

"Then I'm sorry for you, for you've a long job before you. Can't you discuss Lady Luxborough's? Augusta, what an awful woman! how can you stand

her? She is the veriest bear I ever came across! Why did you have her down here?"

"As a wholesome discipline, my dear young friend. No, really because Gilbert is so fond of Lord Luxborough. Poor man! he has a rough time of it."

"Do you like Miss Hinton, Basil? you have never told me. She has some money, I believe," said her Ladyship.

"O dear, yes! She does very well to talk to about the last ball or new opera,—the sort of pattern one is pretty well used to in London. Their conversation is stereotyped."

"Well, so is a young man's, for the matter of that. Commend me to the conversation of Bob Thompson, or Creepy Quick, or Baby Martyne; except that they can only talk of their interesting selves."

"Don't attempt to be satirical, O excellent sister mine; it does not suit your round, good-tempered phiz; and besides, attend to your manners, madam. Here comes your fair hostess. How uncommonly well that sort of get-up suits Miss Mackenzie!"

Susan certainly looked very graceful and handsome, as she came up in her short looped-up gown and jacket, with a becoming little hat just shading her forehead and eyes.

"How d'ye do, Lady Frankland? I told my aunt I would come and meet you; and left her to entertain your party. The General is an old and great friend of hers."

"He is everybody's friend. I expect Charlie here will be much the same at his age," said Lady Frankland, smiling at him. "But we must make haste on, must we not, or we shall keep you waiting?"

"I think there is plenty of time. The keepers are to be ready at one precisely. Shall we go straight to the river, or into the house to rest?"

"Oh, I am not in the least tired. Are you, Evelyn?" said Lady Frankland, as she got off her pony.

"Not in the least," said Evelyn, as she had already alighted.

"Now, we will go to the river side, then," said Susan.

CHAPTER X.

A GOOD HAUL.

“ Of recreation there is none
So free as fishing is, alone.
All other pastimes do no lesse
Than mind and body both possess.
My hand alone my work can do ;
So I can fish and study too.”

ISAAC WALTON.

“ How fortunate we are in our day, Miss Mackenzie,” said Charlie, who somehow found himself often by the heiress’s side, an arrangement to which she never seemed to object.

“ Yes, indeed ; but we salmon-fishers are much disgusted at the dry season. However, to-day we will make the best of it, as it does happen to suit our proceedings. I got a good fish at the top of the river yesterday, though ; it took me an hour and a quarter to kill, and I was quite tired at the end of the day ; it was nearly seventeen pounds. But I won’t talk fishing to you,” she said ; “ your cousin likes it better than you do, and I daresay you think it horribly unladylike of me to fish at all ; don’t you, now ? ”

“Well, I will be honest, and tell you. I was surprised at first, but now I am quite used to it; and you do it all so quietly, that I do not think it in the least unfeminine. It’s quite different from shooting or hunting.”

“You must remember I am a regular Highland lassie; and living down here so much as I do, I’m obliged to make my own amusement; and as I don’t draw, I have only reading and my music to fill up some very long days. I like music passionately; but Aunt Charlotte knows little, and cares less about it. So you see I was a good deal thrown upon my own resources; for, till I came out, I was down here nearly all the year, except a few months in the winter, when I went to Edinburgh for masters. I would have given anything for a brother or sister; and now I am so thankful to have Lady Frankland and Evelyn’s society; it seems so odd to have any neighbour, or any society that is not staying in my own house. But don’t suppose I am unhappy down here. We do very well indeed; and then, I always try and think that what *is* must be best, if people would only believe it.”

“You are very right, Miss Mackenzie; but now, I am afraid, people are so restless and dissatisfied always, that they seldom are content with what *is*.”

“We must finish this conversation another time, Mr.

Hay, because my aunt is beckoning to me, and I must go to her."

By this time, after rather a scrambling walk, the party found themselves by the river side. It was a very pretty sight. The opposite bank came shelving down steeply to the water's edge, covered with fir and birch trees and heather. On the side on which the party was assembled was a fine smooth piece of turf, which extended for about two hundred yards along the stream, before the gorge narrowed up the valley ; a footpath ran along the side of the river, and a slight wooden bridge was thrown over the stream immediately below the pool they were going to net.

Near this bridge was assembled a motley group of fishermen, gillies, and keepers, and a few privileged children, in all varieties of costume, and by them lay a large heap of herring-nets, borrowed for the occasion from the fishermen, as, excepting this one day in the year, there were no nets allowed by Susan on the river. There was an animated discussion going on between the head-keeper and Duncan Munro as to the proper way to put the nets in, and as soon as Susan Mackenzie appeared they both rushed up to her to advocate their own plans. She listened quietly to what each man had to say, and then answered : " No, that won't quite do.

I won't have it done so. Don't you remember how many fish got away last year? Put the net in here, and draw it on to the island opposite," she said. "But stop, how shall we get on to the island?" pointing to a small island in the middle of the stream, now quite bare, owing to the long drought. "Have you plenty of stones ready?" she continued.

"O yes, ma'am ; there they are."

"Now, then, you may begin ; but first we must get on to the island. I can wade ; it's not more than a foot deep here."

"Shall we carry the ladies over?" said Charlie. "I can carry you quite easily, Miss Mackenzie."

"No ;" and she laughed as she answered : "If you are very anxious to carry somebody, you may carry Lady Charlotte—if you can get her consent."

"Heaven forbid !" he said, putting on a comical face of alarm.


"Let the men get some large stones and put them in here ; it's too far from the pool to disturb the fish, and we can step over them easily enough," said Susan ; and away rushed every man, except Sir Gilbert and Basil, to fetch bits of rock to throw in, and so make a path. Sir Gilbert said he was too old, and Basil boldly said he was too lazy, for which Susan bullied him a good deal.

However, when the path was made, he was the first to step into the river, so as to give a hand to the ladies along this slippery road.

Lady Luxborough was proceeding to place herself on the bridge, when Charlie, quite regardless of manners, bawled out to her to come away, or she would frighten every fish out of the pool; which might perhaps not have been the case, but as it certainly would have effectually prevented the fish from rising in fly-fishing, Charlie thought it well to be on the safe side, and warn her Ladyship off.

Lady Luxborough's temper, never a very sweet one, was now raised to a boiling heat, and she began a vehement attack on her lord, for his stupidity in not bringing her camp-stool. "But you ought to remember," "But you might as well say you were sorry," were phrases which were often heard in the conversation; and with some difficulty Lord Luxborough at last succeeded in persuading her to join the other ladies on the island.

While this had been going on the net had been thrown in, and was now bagging well, and being drawn in by a rope, tied at both ends; the men throwing in stones behind the net to prevent any fish trying to escape up the river from below the net. In this excite-



ment the men yelled and screamed at each other in Gaelic, and among the excited gillies were to be seen the General's valet, Lady Luxborough's smart London footman, and Basil's West-country servant,—all as eagerly helping as if their bread depended on it.

Gibby was in a state of ecstasy, tugging at one end of the rope, and nearly falling backwards into the water, till General Tremaine picked him up, and, regardless of kicks and struggles, held him tight. "Now, my man, we shall see the fish first," he said.

All the gentlemen were busy throwing stones, and now one end of the net was slowly dragged on shore; and, "Steady, man, steady," called one; "Keep the net down," said Charlie; "Duncan, you old fool, what the devil—what on earth are you about?" yelled out Basil, and then, catching Evelyn's eye, he half-muttered an apology.

The fish could now be plainly seen kicking and struggling in the net. The ladies rushed to the water side, to the very edge of the small island, on which about twenty people were now standing. All were in great excitement. "Hold hard!" "There's a fish gone!" and "Where's a gaff?" were the sounds that met the ear. When, after a few minutes, the bag of the net was drawn ashore, it was indeed a goodly haul of fish that

it enclosed. There were the fish bouncing about with their beautiful silver sides glancing in the sunshine. One by one, as the men could disentangle them from the meshes of the net, they were thrown up in a heap on the island. Suddenly, when all were watching the net, Gibby called out, "Fish swimming on the grass," and sure enough there was a fish that had not been knocked on the head, struggling towards the water. After it went a gillie; now it was close to the water, and now in the very shallow water, and the gillie had to make a dash at it, and, by great good luck, got a finger through its gills. It kicked so that he could hardly hold it; while the General roared out, "Well done, Sandy; well caught; you are as good as an otter."

"Your otter, General, or a real one?" said Basil, laughing.

"Don't be disrespectful to my gray hair, St. John," answered the old man.

By this time the fish were all arranged in rows on the island. "How many head?" asked Susan.

"A hundred and twenty, ma'am," said the keeper. "Yon's a bonnie fish," he said, lifting an enormous salmon in his scales; "thirty-nine lbs. and a half."

"O that I had had the catching of him!" said Basil in a melancholy voice.

"Ah, sir, that fish would not rise to a fly."

"At all events, it's as well to think so, isn't it?" said Lady Frankland, laying her hand on her brother's shoulder; "if any one could have got it out of the river, it would have been you," for she was immensely proud of his fishing. Eight salmon, nine grilse, three huge *Salmo ferox* or bull-trout, one of which weighed fifteen lbs.—very ugly-looking, coarse, underbred fish—were spread out; the rest were finnock, smolts, parr, brown trout, sea trout, etc.

Gibby danced about, and hugged one small trout tightly that had been given to him, having previously declared he should take it home to the baby. He had been rather tearful at the sight of the fish being killed, till this small one was given to him to pacify him.

Then the gentlemen, on being appealed to by Susan, declared it would be better to put the net once again through the pool. There was some ten minutes' delay in getting the net straight again, which Basil employed in showing Evelyn the difference between a grilse and a salmon, and pointing out to her the clean fresh-run fish, with the sea-lice on its sides, to kill which, and to spawn, the fish leaves the sea. Then he showed her the fish which had been a few weeks in the river, hardly looking like the same animal—a dark, dull

brown—with the parasites in its gills, which the seawater will instantly kill when the fish returns to the sea. He gave her quite a lecture on natural history, and felt pleased to have something to teach her; and as he watched her expressive, intelligent face as he talked to her, he hardly knew himself how much he liked it.

But the net is in again, and the same process recommenced; but this time it does not seem to draw at all, though the men pull equally hard. "Gently, gently, she is fast," said the keeper; "and how will we get her off? She's caught on the muckle stone at the bottom, and Sandy will just have the net torn to pieces, if we go on pulling."

"What's to be done?" said Susan.

"Indeed, I dinna rightly ken."

"Can't you pull up the stone?" suggested Lady Charlotte; "I daresay I could mend the net; there's plenty of new twine at home."

"Mend the net, Milady, if we pulled up yon stone! maybe it is just a piece of the hill herself."

"No, Aunt Charlotte, that won't do," said Susan, and while she was still speaking, one of the bystanders, a quiet man, who had not said much, took off his boots, coat, and waistcoat, and swam towards the place where the net was fast.

"Keep away from the net, man," called out Basil, "or you will get fouled in it;" but the man had dived, and in a few seconds freed it. But this time the fishes were very few, for they had escaped through the great hole the rock had made. The amusement had now lasted long enough, and after dividing the fish amongst the gillies, and selecting a few big ones to be kippered for Sir Gilbert, they thought it was high time for luncheon.

Gibby in the meantime had contrived to wet his feet and petticoats by an attempt to make his fish swim in the shallow water near which they were standing, which, when Lady Frankland saw, she was rather alarmed, as the child was not at all strong, and they were a long way from the house. But Lady Charlotte had no sooner seen the state of the case than, regardless of ceremony, she had taken off shoes, socks, and the dripping petticoats, and rolled him up, fish and all, in a large soft shawl, and sent him on shore with Duncan, who was devoted to the child.

During this interval a very comfortable-looking luncheon had been prepared on the smooth turf, and a cheerful peat fire was blazing, in which Basil was employed roasting the fresh trout in the very best way in which it can be cooked, which is to wrap them in

wet paper, put a pinch of salt in their mouths, and lay them in the hot ashes. They were a very merry party. The General was trying hard to persuade Lady Luxborough to drink some whisky and milk, which he assured her could hurt no one. Her Ladyship drew herself up, indignant at its being supposed possible she could touch spirits, but still contrived to drink the best part of a bottle of porter. Evelyn took compassion on the kind General's mixture, and assured him it was excellent. The fish were soon cooked, and to the surprise of all were highly approved of.

Mayonnaise, chicken, etc., all disappeared at a great rate, for the morning's amusement had given them an appetite. Lady Charlotte was in her element, and carved and talked, and did the honours with great satisfaction to herself. Her happiness was complete when some one asked how the mayonnaise was made, and she was able to promise the receipt, which had been given her by "her poor dear husband's regimental cook's third cousin, who had married her maid." Mr. Ogle entertained the company with one or two curious anecdotes about the natural history of fish, and with the account of the salmon and fish-breeding establishments at Huningue, which he had been lately visiting; in short, they all seemed happy and amused. The food having been done

full justice to, the young men, with permission received, lighted their cigars, and apparently abandoned themselves to the *dolce far niente*. It was near five before the fragments of the feast were handed over to the expectant gillies, and the party sauntered slowly back to the Castle to spend the rest of the day.

CHAPTER XI.

SCHEMES.

“ Why, nothing comes amiss, if money come withal.”

“ I charge thee, fling away ambition.”

SHAKESPEARE.

It was no vain alarm that Lady Frankland had taken about her boy, for it was discovered on the following day that the poor little fellow had caught a violent cold, notwithstanding Lady Charlotte's care for him. This made the mother very uneasy, and she had sat nearly all day with the child in the nursery. There was enough to make her anxious, for Gibby was very feverish, and she knew that they were twenty miles and more from Ullapool, the nearest point where they could get a doctor.

About dressing-time Sir Gilbert came into the room to see how the child was getting on, and found him sitting up in his cot, playing with Evelyn, who was cutting out paper soldiers for him ; the little hands were hot and burning, and Sir Gilbert settled to send for the doctor, though he himself thought the boy less

feverish than he had been earlier in the day. He said to Evelyn, "I suppose you fled here, my dear, because you could not stand Lady Luxborough any longer; it's very good of you, though, to sit up here with this little chap and Milady."

"I like it very much, indeed I do; though I do think I had enough of her, to say the truth. She thought it 'her duty as a friend' to say much to me that in no way concerned her, and then worried her daughter so effectually that she made her cry, and then I could stand it no more, and was very glad I could plead Gibby's illness as an excuse for leaving her Ladyship to her own devices."

"Never mind, Evelyn," said Lady Frankland, looking up from the letter she was writing; "she will be gone in two days. Now, Gibby darling, you must be quiet and go to sleep; see how good baby is--quite asleep;" and there in her cradle lay the little girl, the picture of health and beauty,--a dark-haired, black-eyed little maiden of a year old.

Evelyn left the room, and Lady Frankland got up from her occupation and took the boy on her lap, and he, being really tired, fell asleep in a few minutes.

"What a very nice girl that is, Augusta," said Sir Gilbert; "I never saw one I liked better, except yourself.

What a really nice wife she would make for Basil ; just the very woman ; she has all the qualities he requires, and would make him such a far happier man."

" For Basil !" echoed Lady Frankland. " What do you mean, Gilbert ? How can you think of such a thing ? Basil must marry money, and I want him to marry Susan Mackenzie. Evelyn hasn't a penny. I'm very ambitious for him, dear, you know, and immensely proud of him ; he mustn't throw himself away. Think what worlds of good he might do with Susan's money ! And Basil is so good, well-principled, and anxious to be in a useful position in life."

" Well, my dear, and do you suppose people can do no good in the world without money ? because my experience had taught me to think very differently. Susan Mackenzie is a capital girl, and I like her very much, but I think her too much used to her own way, and too independent to suit Basil. Don't you think he would be miserable with a wife who would take the wind so completely out of his sails as she would ? You know how fond I am of Basil, Augusta ; I don't think I could care more for him if he were my own son ; but think how fond he is of his own way, and of being listened to, and made much of. Do you think he would be happy with Susan Mackenzie ? She is well calculated

to suit Charles Hay; indeed, I sometimes think she has a slight tenderness for him, notwithstanding her off-hand, careless manner, and he seems to get on well enough with her. But, my dear wife, don't let us be match-making and match-marring, or sacrificing happiness to money."

"Well, we shall see," answered Lady Frankland. "I like Charlie very much; but as to any girl looking at him when Basil is there, I can't understand it, and I'm afraid I can't promise not to do all I can to make Basil like Susan. I don't agree with you about her character; and he would be another man quite with a large property to manage; and do just imagine my grandfather's rage if he got any idea that Basil was thinking of marrying Evelyn Moncrieff. She is a very nice dear girl, but that never would do."

"Lord Pendarves has the same absurd ideas that Basil has about marrying an heiress, or rather, I suppose it is he that has dinned it into Basil's ears that he can't marry without money, just because he has only a life-interest in the little he has. Why, he could insure his life, as lots have done before, and will do again."


"Here come the young men in from fishing," said Lady Frankland, as she moved to the window and

looked out. "Oh, Gilbert, is not Basil good and beautiful-looking?"

"Yes, my dear; yes, a very nice good face; but remember, you must not spoil Basil so much. Just think of the amount of adoration and attention he will require from his wife if you go on at this rate."

"I wish Edith could have come down here a little while, it would have done her so much good; and then she could have gone about with Basil, which I cannot. Well, I shall watch Evelyn carefully. One day, I forget which, he and the General and Charlie dine at Achmelvich," said her Ladyship.

"When the Luxboroughs are gone, I suppose," answered her husband. "Poor old Luxborough, he made a great mistake in his marriage, but then he did what so many do—was caught at the rebound. Dear me, I remember it as well as if it was yesterday. He was desperately in love with Lady Diana Heathcote, and the parents would not allow it, and he was miserable, and rather took to drinking; and one evening he was a little merry at some London ball, and proposed or said something of the kind to that handsome Miss Morton, and her mother, old Warnborough, never lost sight of him, and announced the marriage then and there right and left, and next morning poor Luxborough



found himself nailed. At least that was the story ; but he is my oldest and dearest friend, and I would do anything in the world for him."

"A man, with his 'oldest and dearest friend,' always amuses me so much," said Lady Frankland, as she rose and laid the sleeping Gibby in his cot. "They meet with, 'My dear old fellow, so delighted to see you;' 'What ages since we met;' 'You are looking ten years younger,' and so on ; a pause, and in two minutes each has taken up a sheet of the *Times*."

Sir Gilbert laughed heartily, and said, "Well, my oldest friend will have to read the *Times* instead of dining, if I don't go and dress. You will come down to dinner, dear, won't you ?"

"O yes ; I think Gibby will be quiet now, and nurse can watch him. He is very feverish, poor little man. I shall be very glad when the doctor comes."

"Lady Frankland, shall I stay with Gibby while you are at dinner ? I'm not a bit hungry, and no one will miss me," said Evelyn Moncrieff, who had just come into the room.

"I know one person who will miss you,"—Evelyn coloured,—“the General,” and she laughed merrily. “I never saw such a flirtation as he carries on with you ; believe me, there is nothing like the atten-

tions and devotions of an elderly admirer," said Sir Gilbert.

"No, my dear," answered Lady Frankland; "you can't be spared, and the chick is fast asleep. Now I must go and dress."

Evelyn looked excessively pretty as she stood in the doorway. She had on a bright blue silk skirt, with a white body, and a blue ribbon passed through her hair, which it set off to great advantage. She had lovely hands and arms, which were no slight addition to her very attractive appearance.

"Oh, Evelyn, do be good-natured, and entertain Lady Luxborough till I'm dressed; I'll be as quick as I possibly can," and Evelyn nodded and went down stairs.

The drawing-room, however, was untenanted, and she waited a few minutes alone, when Basil St. John walked in, saying, "You and I are always ready the first, I think, Miss Moncrieff."

"I'm afraid all my virtues are little useless things, like punctuality," said Evelyn, putting down the book she had taken up.

"Your virtues are just those most calculated to make all those about you happy," said Basil quietly.

Evelyn looked surprised, and rather pleased, and

answered, "Ah, you see, you don't see the many faults, Mr. St. John; they are numberless, I'm afraid."

"No one is perfect, and it would be folly to pretend it; but one thing I admire in you beyond measure, and you must forgive my saying it, and that is the way that from morning to night you are always occupied, and always active and independent."

"Then I'm afraid you have been used to very idle people. I think I have always had the advantage of living with very clever people, who, though they were not pleasant, obliged me to keep up everything I knew, and to try to learn more, and pick up all the crumbs of information I could."

"Your music in the evening also is an immense treat to me. Will you sing 'In terra sola,' and 'I saw from the beach' for me this evening?" said Basil.

"O yes, with pleasure; but why do you like such melancholy songs?" asked Evelyn.

"I don't think I do in general, but—" and here Basil was interrupted by Lady Luxborough's entrance, who came in looking very handsome in crimson velvet and pearls, but extremely overdressed for the occasion, as was also her daughter, who wore a smart and dirty London ball gown.

"Nobody else down; where's Lady Frankland? What

odd things people do! I met her going to dress just now. Oh! I beg your pardon, Mr. St. John; I didn't think you could be down already, so lately as I saw you come in," said Lady Luxborough; then, after a moment's pause, she continued, "You never were in London, Miss Moncrieff, I suppose?" she said, glancing contemptuously at Evelyn's costume.

"O yes; I was out a whole season the year before last," answered Evelyn quietly.

"Who took you out? I never remember seeing you anywhere," said her Ladyship in a voice of great contempt.

"I know who took you out," said Basil. "I remember seeing you the one day I happened to be in such very good society—Lady William Corrington; but then she only goes to such very smart parties, that we were not likely to meet Miss Moncrieff."

Lady Luxborough blushed scarlet, and Evelyn looked at Basil rather reproachfully, and said, "I went out with Lady William, and she was very kind to me, and took as much care of me as if I had been her own daughter;" and then she added, meaning to soothe Lady Luxborough's ruffled plumes, "I remember so well seeing Miss Hinton at the Duchess of Clanronald's; she looked very well in that costume." Now this,

though Evelyn knew it not, was a specially sore point with Lady Luxborough, in that, after moving heaven and earth for an invitation to the Duchess's ball, all that she could obtain was an invitation for Miss Hinton to go under some one else's chaperonage.

Lady Luxborough looked daggers, and muttered something about people being out of their places, when fortunately Lady Frankland and the rest of the party came in. But, when dinner was announced, as Basil put out his arm to take Evelyn in, Lady Frankland said, "I think we ought to change places a little. Basil, will you take Miss Hinton? and the General will take you, Evelyn." Basil frowned, but did as he was told; and talked all dinner-time to Mr. Ogle, who was on his other side.

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

“Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever,
Do noble things, not dream them all day long;
And so let life, death, and that vast for ever,
Be one grand, sweet song.”

KINGSLEY.

THE following day, at Achmelvich Castle, the heiress was sitting over her dressing-room fire, having her hair brushed. “Parsons,” she began, “have you been with those things to Mr. Macrae?”

“Yes, ma’am, and he was very grateful to you for your kindness; and if he is not taking a liberty, he would be so glad to see you any time you are passing his way.”

“O yes, I’ll go certainly, but I’ve been so busy I have had no time.—How I do wish there was an Episcopal church here,” she thought; “I can’t bear these kirk services, and it’s that or none. If there was

one, I suppose I and my servants would form all the congregation."

Mr. Macrac was the minister, who had met with a bad accident the week before, and was now laid up.

Susan dropped the book she was pretending to read, and dismissed her maid, got up, walked to the window, threw it wide open, leant her head against the shutter, and began to soliloquize thus: "What a mess I do make of things!" and she took a letter from the table. "I have got this worthless tenant through my own softness and obstinacy combined. I never shall get on alone, and yet I can't marry any of these people who ask me. No one knows how I long for some one I could care for a little, who would help and guide me. Money is indeed a heavy responsibility. I know I act on impulse. What a thorough mess I have made of my benefactions!" and a smile crossed her face at the recollection of the way in which she had been fleeced on all sides.

"Dear old Aunt Charlotte, she is not a bit of help to me, and the spirit of contradiction comes on me so often to oppose her economies and plans. How happy those people all seem at the lodge! Mr. St. John—why, it has done him a world of good to be with Lady Frankland and Evelyn. What a nice creature he is, and he

never 'spoons' one in the least. How well he would do for Evelyn; but she is always praising Charles Hay. Now, he is the sort of man I could look up to, only I don't believe he ever has had an idea of the kind in his head. How nobly and thoroughly independent he is in all his ways! I remember what my aunt told me about his giving up all the money to his mother; ah! but then, she added, 'Mr. Hay is a most terrible flirt, and has nothing whatever to marry on,' and she rambled back to his father's history. Poor dear old thing, what a funny mind she must have. She was very positive about Charlie Hay, though. How pleasant he is! such immense fun. He was rich about the Dublin young ladies, who did nothing but tell him they were so tired of their names; and he bears all his trials so good-humouredly. Poor fellow! for he has had a great deal to worry him at home, I fancy, and some trouble to make both ends meet. What a pity society is so constituted that I can't say, 'Do take a little of this money which I am wasting, and make your mother comfortable with it;' and he likes my music, and seems to like talking to me. Now, I should like really to be his great friend, and marry him to some very nice girl; but she must be very nice indeed. Evelyn Moncrieff? No, she would not do, she's too quiet and passive; at least

she seems so. I wonder how she would behave under circumstances of great danger or temptation. Plenty of moral courage in her, I expect. Moral courage! that's what Charles Hay and I agreed women had more of than men. He said men had no courage to face each other's opinions, and run counter to them. They get into trouble for fear of being chaffed or laughed at. Women don't mind that; they do what they do, right or wrong, because they choose, not because other women laugh them in or out of it. I am sure he is right. I wonder what I should have done had I been a man? gone a great pace, I suppose. Well, it's weary trying and trying for ever and ever to do what is right, and finding one fails so utterly. If I only had such a man as good old General Tremaine to help and guide me. I wonder whether he would kindly marry me?" and she laughed outright at her idea. "Heigho! '*Quand on n'a pas ce que l'on aime, il faut aimer ce que l'on a,*' that, and '*Faire ce que dois advenir que pourra,*' are my two mottoes, and I must try and act up to them; if one only could, what a blessing it would be; and now I must stop thinking, and write to Lady Frankland. How surprised Mr. St. John will be at being let in for a dance! He votes reels a disgrace to the nineteenth century, I believe; but we will have some good vales, and by

that time I suppose the Grants will be here, and Lady Luxborough gone. What a woman that is!" and Susan Mackenzie sat down and wrote as follows :-

"DEAR LADY FRANKLAND, -We are going to have our yearly tenants' ball on Thursday, and my aunt and I think it would be very good of you if you and your party would condescend to come and help to enliven us with your presence. If you will come, will you spare Miss Moncrieff to me on Tuesday, as she was kind enough to say she would help me with her taste in the decoration of our room? If the gentlemen who dine with us on Wednesday like to have beds here, I shall be delighted to put them up.--With much love, believe me, dear Lady Frankland, yours very sincerely,

"SUSAN MACKENZIE.

"ACHIMELVICH CASTLE, *Saturday*."

Having finished this note, she put on her hat and came down stairs, saying, "Act, act in the living present. I will go at once to poor Mr. Macrae, though I meant to have dawdled away the afternoon in the boat, reading *Guy Livingstone*."

She went down to her aunt, and said, "Are you busy, dear, or will you walk with me to see Mr.

Macrae? I'm going to take him some jelly and some of the grapes: there are a few ripe, I see. I can go alone if you are busy, or afraid of the sun."

"Oh, my dear, I'm sure I will go with pleasure; but you won't mind waiting while I prepare a bottle of my embrocation for him, poor man. I shan't be five minutes."

"I'll wait in the garden, Aunt Charlotte, and let the dogs out."

"Only one, please; that horrid Scamp tore all my lace last time."

"Very well," said Susan, as she ran down to prepare her basket of food. During all the walk she listened patiently to Aunt Charlotte's dissertations. Called on the sick minister, found him well enough to be able to preach next day. Visited the schools on her way back, and charmed the children and schoolmaster alike by her pleasant manner, and the real interest she took in them.

The next day was Sunday, and the weather still lovely and hot. Susan and her aunt drove to the kirk, which piece of duty they never failed to perform. Lady Charlotte did not at all mind it; for she was of that school of divinity who think that the beauty of a sermon consists in its length, and not in your being able

to get any ideas from it. She had been brought up north of the Tweed, and though nominally of an Episcopalian family, her notions of the Church were rather wild, and when she could not find an Episcopal Church she was by no means displeased with the prayers and psalmody of the Establishment.

Susan Mackenzie disliked it all cordially ; but as she was a young lady of decidedly High Church tendencies, this may easily be imagined ; and she always entered a vehement protest against the whole system, and declared that she only went because the people would think she was a heathen if she did not.

And truly it was a melancholy performance, for in Sutherlandshire, as in most other parts of Scotland, the bulk of the inhabitants were Free Kirk, and separated from the Establishment, and consequently the poor old kirk was nearly empty, and except Susan's Scotch servants contained few others. To-day the congregation had an addition in the shape of Evelyn Moncrieff, the General, Basil, Charles, and Mr. Ogle, who had come over from the lodge to see how Mr. Macrae was going on, and, to their surprise, found him well enough to preach, and so were answered in their inquiries. Several dogs likewise formed part of the audience, and twice a battle-royal waged under the reading-desk, thereby

disturbing the gravity of the English part of the congregation.

In the accent of the people there was none of the twang of the Lowland Scotch, for in Sutherlandshire, where Gaelic is the language of the natives, English is taught as a foreign tongue in the schools; and generally with a very pure accent.

The service was long and tedious, and the "discourse" of an hour and-a-half turned on the not very practical subject "of the propriety of eating things offered to idols;" but it ended at last. The small building was soon emptied, and while the carriages were being prepared the gentlefolks remained talking outside the kirk.

"Susan," said Evelyn, "I've a note from Lady Frankland for you; she thought I should be sure to see you here; such a strenuous supporter as you are of your country's creed. She will allow you my valuable company on Tuesday; but she very much doubts whether she can come to you on Thursday. Poor little Gibby is very far from well, and she and Sir Gilbert have sent to Ullapool for the doctor. I did not want to leave her, but she says I must go."

"Poor little fellow, I hope it is nothing very serious," said Susan.

"I trust not," answered Evelyn; "but he is not very strong, and being the only boy they are naturally anxious; but I daresay the doctor will soon set him up."

"It's very jolly of you to come and help me. I hope it won't bore you very much; it will take us all Wednesday to arrange," said Susan.

"By the bye, gentlemen," chimed in Lady Charlotte, "I hope you are going to stay and sleep at Achmelvich on Wednesday, for it really is not worth while going back to return again on Thursday, for I suppose you mean to honour Susan's dance; it's a long dreary drive at night over these hills, and so close to the water as the road goes in places. There have been several accidents there, and the mail was upset quite lately. I could show you the exact spot."

"We shall be very happy to stay at Achmelvich, Lady Charlotte," said the General, bowing, "for the sake of your society and Miss Mackenzie's, and not to avoid these terrors you hold up. Give us credit to suppose that the danger would be no drawback with such a prize before us," he said, laying his hand on his heart.

"That's very kindly said of you, General," said Susan; "we don't often get such pretty things said to us; do we, Evelyn?"

"I don't, certainly," answered Evelyn, smiling; "but you are used to homage right and left."

"And much it all means, dear," Susan said sadly; "but here comes Mr. Macrae, and I must speak to him, and ask him how he is."

"If he is better, Susan, I am sure it is owing to my embrocation; I never knew it fail."

"Mr. Macrae, can you come back and dine with us—the change will do you good?" said Susan kindly.

"Thank you, no, my dear young lady. I have another discourse to deliver this evening at the school-house on the hill."

"Well, you will come then on Thursday, and be sure and bring your sister; there is not such another reel-dancer this side of Inverness. Goodbye now. The ponies are very fidgety. Goodbye, Evelyn dear, come early on Tuesday, like a good little girl." And so saying, with a pretty graceful bow to the rest of the party, Susan jumped into her pony-carriage, where her aunt was already seated, and drove off.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GLIMMERING OF THE TRUTH.

“Que fais-tu là seul et rêveur ?
Je m'entretiens avec moi-même,
Ah prends garde au péril extrême
Que que causer avec un flatteur.”

“BERKELEY SQUARE,
July.

“DEAR BASIL,—Thank you for the fish you sent me. You have a view to kill me with gout, I suppose, for the kipper was first-rate. I hear Luxborough is with you, and her Ladyship—Eheu ! Ask him if he can let me have half a score of his Hampshire Down ewe-lambs to breed from ; and tell him I mean to beat him in short-horns at the next meeting of R. A. S.

“You are, of course, making the most of your time with the heiress. You know how well that would suit your book, and please me, for marry without money you cannot.

“No news, except that Connomon leaves the turf and marries Mrs. Grant, who pays his debts, but doesn't allow him a latch-key. Bob Thompson is smashed for

£20,000, and amongst his lot they cannot raise the wind to that extent.

"I'm not very well, and gone under the old doctor.

"Blue pills for ever. Write to me.--Yr. affec.

"PENDARVES."

This letter Basil had brought to him with many others, when he was sitting by the river-side at luncheon with Charlie,—invitations to balls, Greenwich and Richmond dinners, etc., which had followed him north. He laughed heartily at some of them, and agreed "it was better to be down in Scotland quietly, than rotting away days and nights alike in London."

Basil read his grandfather's letter carefully, folded it up, put it in his pocket, and sat quietly thinking for some time. Then he turned to Charlie, "Any news?" "No, not much," he answered; "my mother's ideas of Scotland and fishing amuse me very much. Holloa, here's an invite to deer-stalk any day I like to fix next month from Macintosh. That's uncommonly good-natured of him. I confess I should like of all things to have a stag's head of my own shooting, and stick up in my digging in town."

"Ah, don't be too sure about getting the head, even when you have got the animal; they don't always give

them to you, I can tell you, and then the keepers change them, and play all manner of tricks. No, if you want a good head, better do as a man who rejoiced in the name of Tomkins did. He rented a very good moor in the east of Scotland, and to the astonishment of the rest of his party, who knew he could not hit a haystack, one year he came south with a magnificent royal head of thirteen tines, which appeared in glory over his sideboard in Brompton. 'Fine head; got it myself off my moor in the north.' Sure enough he had got it himself, for he had given £5 for it to the old keeper, whose cottage it had graced for many a day, having been shot by him in the winter. It's all true, isn't it, Duncan? He laughs."

"Ay, ay, sir; I've heard tell that story often and often; it's true enough," said Duncan.

"So you see, Charlie, if you want a head, better buy a good one, and have done with it."

"I've a mind above your grovelling one," answered the young man, lying back and lighting his pipe. "I wonder whether people think I've come into a fortune: here are actually three invitations for grouse-shooting, but I don't mean to go away from here till my time's up, as Sir Gilbert and Augusta are good enough to keep me. This is thorough enjoyment." He smoked on for

some time, and then said, "I shall go on up the river ; are you going on fishing ?"

"No, Charlie, I've cut my shins, and can't tumble about amongst these rocks any more to-day. I'll wait here till you come back, and finish my sketch."

"Very well, then ; there's the *Saturday Review*. Read that, and wake yourself up with some of its just, pleasant articles. What fun and what common sense combined ! How I do enjoy it ! Now, I'm off. I shall take you, Duncan ; Mr. St. John doesn't want you. Sandy, you may stay with Mr. St. John."

Basil told the lad he might take his things and go home, as he did not mean to fish any more ; and be sure and leave the two fish he had killed, in the dog-cart in which they were to go back.

Basil took up the *Saturday*, and amused himself for half-an-hour reading the lighter articles ; then he embarked in a political article, and found he was not attending, so dropped the paper, and apparently remained watching the river as it flowed rapidly by. But his thoughts were far otherwise occupied ; and over his face stole an expression of weariness and sadness. Of what was he thinking ? He hardly knew. At first, that this life was very pleasant and thoroughly enjoyable ; then, as it was very much Basil's habit to look ahead

and seek for grievances, he began to reflect that time was passing away, and that he must kill time somehow through the autumn and winter. Why would it not always be the fishing season? Then came the reflection, was it only the fishing he regretted? He had other bouts of salmon-fishing in previous years, and had never felt so low about leaving Scotland before. He was very fond of shooting; and had the run of all his grandfather's property. Was it leaving Augusta that he regretted? No; he had been always fondest of his sister Edith, who was younger than himself, and who had till now been his great ally; till now he had thought her very perfect.

What was the matter with him? He took up his sketching book, and began to cut his pencils. What was it which now made him feel restless and dissatisfied, and ever anxious to be back at the lodge? He, who used to fish from nine in the morning till dusk, and find the day all too short for the amusement, now found from eleven till three more than sufficient. To what did he look forward? he asked himself. To a saunter into the garden amongst the gooseberry-bushes, and up the village to sit on the bridge with his sister and Evelyn Moncrieff, and watch the salmon lying asleep in the river below.


Then he began to think of Evelyn: "What a blessed, unaffected, light-hearted soul she is!" and he stopped suddenly in the outline that he was trying to draw.

"Am I falling in love with that girl? That would never do. What would my grandfather and Augusta think of such an idea? But it can't be. I like her well enough; but I am not in love with her. I have never been in love since I was seventeen, and was desperate about my tutor's daughter: let's see, she must have been a good fifteen years older than I was;" and Basil laughed aloud at the thought. "Poor Miss Maunder! she married the curate, and has eight red-haired children. "No man is wise at all hours. I thought in those days I must hang myself, when I heard of her engagement. Well, since then I have never cared for any girl. I wonder why my grandfather writes like this!" and he took out the old peer's letter, and read it through. "Susan Mackenzie, be hanged! why the deuce can't they leave a fellow alone? Here I am being told for ever to marry her; and I don't care one straw about her; and if she wasn't so jolly and good-tempered, I should hate her, because Augusta is always cramming her down my throat. Of course, it would be a good thing to marry her,—no need to tell me that; she is well connected, and all that. But, thank Heaven! bad

as I may be, I'm not quite such a brute as to marry a woman I don't care for, solely because she has money. How beautiful Evelyn did look when she was singing! and how gloriously she does sing; worse luck to it. I wonder whether she will ever care about me." For Basil, with all his faults, was not vain or conceited about himself, though people who knew him only a little thought he gave himself great airs.

"What folly it is to think about the girl at all! I daresay there's some cornet quartered at Exeter to whom she is devoted,—there may be, for all I know to the contrary; and besides that, bespoke or not, she won't do for me. But certainly I never did feel more like falling in love.

"But the grandfather—the grandfather: there's the rub! A nice fix I should be in if I married any one without his consent. Why, he would dock my allowance; and I should be worth from £600 to £800 a year, and that would be a very nice thing to marry upon. *Che sard sard*, and it's no use bothering myself now. What I like about Evelyn is, that she is so utterly unlike the regulation young lady—so active and so handy, and able to look after herself; to see the way she trots about the hills, and along those detestable paths by the river. She is not a victim to her clothes,



and yet how wonderfully neatly she is always turned out. Poor girl! she would make a grand wife for Charlie; but as for his marrying, I don't see how he is ever to do it, for that property won't right itself in his time. But how cheery he is about it all, while I go grumbling on. I wish I knew what Evelyn thought about me; she always seems to like to talk to me; but then she is as happy with the General or Gibby, to all appearance."

"Hallo! why, here is Topsy," he said, as a great black retriever bounced up to him. "Have you run away, old man? No! why, there's the General and that girl," he said, and blushed consciously as he got up.

"What a long walk, Miss Moncrieff! are you not quite beat? Will you have some sherry?" he said, as he stooped and rinsed his flask-cup in the water.

"No, none, thank you, Mr. St. John. The General and I had some delicious thick milk at the cottage. Your sister was sitting with Gibby, and Lady Luxborough was packing; so, as it was not very hot the General and I thought we would have a good long walk: and he has been so good and kind, and taken such care of me," she said, smiling at him. "But it took me some time to get here; it's a good four miles."

"You will go back in the dog-cart, won't you? There's

loads of room ; and you will trust me to drive you, won't you ?" added Basil, in rather a lower tone of voice.

" O yes !" she said, lifting her eyes to him, and dropping them as quickly, when she saw the expression of admiration with which he was looking at her. And she certainly did look very pretty in her dark serge dress and jacket.

" What a nice sketch you have begun ! Hasn't he, General ?" she said, taking up the portfolio.

" Yes, you've got on famously, St. John," said the General.

" Oh, it's a horrid daub ! won't you do a little to it for me ?" said Basil.

" I shall only spoil it." But as he went on begging her to help him with the water, which would look as if it ran the wrong way, she took off her gloves and sat down on the grass and began painting, and Basil sat down beside her to watch what she did.

" Where's Hay ?" said the General, who did not much care about this sketching process.

" Gone up the river a little way," replied Basil.

" Then I'll walk up and join him, and then we can come back together," said the General.

Basil thought of his late reflections as he saw him turn away, and half smiled as he thought how he and Evelyn were somehow always thrown together.

"How comes it," he said, "that the Luxboroughs are not gone?"

"Oh, she got a letter by the post to-day to say they could not be taken in at the next place they were going to till Wednesday. I'm sure I'm not surprised at people's putting off that moment as late as possible. She was as cross as she could be, and blew *me* up, who could have nothing to do with the matter," said Evelyn, laughing. "How any woman who really does mean to do right, can systematically make herself so unpleasant, I can't imagine; I suppose it's all temper. By the bye, Lady Charlotte drove over to prescribe for Gibby, and I left her with a bottle in one hand and a spoon in the other, vainly trying to persuade your sister to let her give some of her medicine to the child."

"Did Miss Mackenzie come over also?" asked Basil.

"No, she didn't; but how anxiously you asked that: has Susan exercised her usual spell on you, the stony-hearted, as Lady Frankland used to call you?"

"Did she? I'll pull her up for that. But, as regards Miss Mackenzie, I think her very pleasant; but she is about the last person I should ever fall in love with, because—" and he hesitated.

"Because what?" said Evelyn; "do tell me. I think if I were a man, Susan is the person of all others I

should like to marry; she is so very straightforward and simple, and so full of life and fun, and not in the least spoilt by all the attention she has received."

"Do you remember, Miss Moncrieff, the first conversation I ever had with you was about Miss Mackenzie? You would not tell me what she was like," asked Basil.

"Yes, I remember quite well. I would not say anything, because Lady Frankland had done nothing but tell me how exactly she would suit you, so I would not prejudice you in any way. Don't you think I was wise?" added Evelyn.

"Yes, perhaps. I was disappointed in her looks; but then I only admire fair-haired women."

Evelyn laughed, and said, "Thank you for the implied compliment."

"No," he continued, "I don't mean it as a compliment to you, but it's a fact. You ask me why I don't fall in love with your friend. What an odd question!—simply, I suppose, because she does not come at all near my ideal; but she has plenty of others to worship her; she is too plain-spoken for me."

"Well, what do you think of Miss Hinton?" asked Evelyn.

"Oh, that poor girl; what a life she must have of it! I wonder she doesn't run away with her music-master

to escape from that mother; and yet Lady Luxborough, I know, means kindly; but she does all her virtuous actions in such a very unpleasant way: sits up with a sick servant, and preaches and rates till she makes the patient's slight cold nearly turn into a nervous fever. She is always saying to me, 'I'm one of those people who think everybody ought to have a profession,' just as if it wasn't worry enough to be idle without having it dinned into one's ears for ever. How well you have done that bridge; there's the General's head appearing on the other side—put him in, and Charlie. I shall always keep that drawing as a remembrance of my happy time up here," said Basil, as the others came within earshot.

"Oh, what a very jolly drawing!" exclaimed Charlie, when he came up with his face radiant with pleasure; "but I can show even better than that. Look at Duncan, Basil."

"Ah, Mr. St. John, you gave up fishing at the wrong moment. Yon's a right fish," said Duncan.

"By Jove! so it is; hook it up. Forty lbs., as I'm alive," said Basil, who had jumped on his feet with alacrity on seeing the prize, which with difficulty Duncan was carrying.

"Charlie, where did you get it?"

"In the Dyke Pool, and a pretty dance it led me. It rose at once with a green-bodied fly, and then it would not come again, so I changed it to this small brown tail and light body, and hooked it, and I had to give it thirty-eight minutes before I landed him; the best fun I ever had in my life. Isn't he a beauty?"

"I'm uncommonly glad you got him, old fellow. Did you see the fun, General?" asked Basil.


"Only the last quarter of an hour, and I must give my young friend all *κῶδος* for the way he payed the fish. I had no idea he was such a fisherman."

"What's worth doing at all is worth doing well, or rather trying to do well," answered Charlie; "but I beg your pardon, Miss Moncrieff, for all this fishing talk."

"Oh, it's nothing to what I am used to," laughed Evelyn, "and at any rate it is better than hunting conversation. I can understand what you mean, and I can see the result."

"Now, let's see the sketch, Basil. Oh, give it to me. Why, it's the very image of the place."

"Give it to you, indeed! Don't you wish you may get it? You're a cool hand, Charlie. I shall do nothing of the kind," answered Basil. "Why, it's nearly all Miss Moncrieff's doing."



"O then, that accounts for its goodness; but come away, it's getting cold and damp; let's get home."

They walked to the cottage where the dog-cart put up, Charlie descanting all the way to Basil upon the big fish, and leaving the General to entertain Evelyn.

When they got into the dog-cart Basil carefully helped her in and sat by her to drive; but having done that he hardly spoke during the journey, and left her to banter the General and Charlie upon the way the cart was weighed down behind, which Charlie declared was entirely owing to his fish being put too much behind.

They were very merry, and Evelyn told General Tremaine that he must dance with her at Susan's ball; and he declared he would dance the reel of Tulloch. Basil then chimed in and declaimed against reels, and said, "You don't dance them, I hope, Miss Moncrieff?" and then added, "I think them so ungraceful; no one but a bred and born Scot ought to think of such a thing."

"I expect that you and I and everybody will have to dance them on Thursday," said Evelyn; "so make up your mind to it."

As the dog-cart drove up to the door, Lady Frankland was standing on the steps, and said in rather an annoyed voice, "I thought, Evelyn, that you and the

General had gone up the Achmelvich road ; I'm sure you must be quite sick of the river."

Evelyn looked rather surprised, and the General answered, "The road to the river is less steep, and I persuaded her to go that way."

Lady Frankland then said, "I've been wanting you very much, Evelyn, to help me with some writing."

"Dear Lady Frankland, I'm so very sorry ; let me do it now, there's plenty of time," said the girl, as she followed her hostess into the house.

"Whew !" said Charlie, "what's in the wind, I wonder, Milady's out of sorts." Basil did not answer, but went straight to his room.

CHAPTER XIV.

A GUEST WHO IS A TRIAL.

“ Her only fault (and that is faults enough)
Is,—that she is intolerable curst,
And shrewd, and froward ; so beyond all measure,
That, were my state far worser than it is,
I would not wed her for a mine of gold.”

Taming of the Shrew.

LADY LUXBOROUGH, who was thoroughly discomposed owing to the change in her plans, seemed determined to revenge herself upon those she was with, and to make the evening as unpleasant to her host and hostess as possibly could be. When you had been a short time in her company, you could not but feel as if your fur had all been stroked backwards, and on the defensive.


During dinner-time she had done nothing but remonstrate with her lord for what he ate and drank ; prophesied endless illnesses to him, through which she declared nothing should induce her to nurse him.

Her conversation was much in this style :—“ My dear Luxborough, how any man in his senses can eat haggis and not expect to die directly ; really, you do things on

purpose to provoke one, I think." "Stewed fruit again ! I wonder what was the use of going to Dr. Fergusson this spring. You are enough to provoke a saint."

After dinner she told Lady Frankland she was convinced that she was giving Gibby the very medicine that must turn his slight cold into a gastric fever, till she made the poor woman so nervous, that at last she left the room, prepared to find her child half-dead when she got to the nursery. Then Lady Luxborough turned to Evelyn, and told her that she sang well enough, but that *she* had such an ear, that she thought it kinder to say that Miss Moncrieff almost invariably sang out of tune;" and her drawing was pretty, certainly, but so out of harmony; and so her Ladyship ran on till the gentlemen came into the room, when, after a slight pause in the conversation, Basil went up to Lord Luxborough, and gave him his grandfather's message about the lambs, and before Lord Luxborough could answer a word, his wife put in—"She was sorry, but really it was out of the question; the lambs were *the one* thing that could not be spared."

But Lord Luxborough for once contradicted her with these words, "My dear, you really know nothing whatever about the matter; it so happens fifty of these lambs are going to Exeter market next month, and Pendarves



is heartily welcome to the lot, if he likes. He won't beat my short-horns, though. Tell him, St. John, that he must come and judge for himself this autumn;" and then the good-natured henpecked peer turned to Sir Gilbert, and began a learned discussion on sulphates and phosphates, deep and surface draining, which suited them both equally.

By this time, however, Lady Luxborough, nothing daunted, had found another victim to bully, for on sitting down to whist after tea with the General, Mr. Ogle, and Basil, she suddenly said, during a deal, "Mr. St. John, what has become of that heiress you were hunting last season, Miss—Miss---what was the girl's name?"

"I am at a loss to inform your Ladyship; I was not aware I was hunting any heiress," answered Basil, without moving a muscle of his face.

"O yes, I heard all about it at the time," said the Lady, glancing at Evelyn, whose head was now bent low over Charlie's photograph-book, in which she was sticking some ciphers over the portraits.

"O yes, you know," she continued, "Miss Hopkinson, or some such lovely name—a girl with red hair, and £20,000 a year."

"Miss Hopkinson, I believe, was an heiress, but as I

never even was introduced to her, perhaps your Ladyship will believe that I had no designs on either her hand or heart," answered Basil.

"But on her purse, which suits you much better. Why, you always went about saying you would only marry a girl with money. Your aunt and your cousin, Miss Hay, told me so," said the unabashed peeress.

"Really, people are very good to trouble themselves so much about my private affairs," said Basil, now thoroughly annoyed; "and all I can assure you, Lady Luxborough, is, that I mean to choose for myself whenever the time comes;" and Evelyn, as she looked up, caught Basil's eye for an instant fixed on her rather deprecatingly, and blushed unconsciously.

"It is your Ladyship's deal," said the General, with a good-natured wish to change the subject of conversation, "and, Miss Hinton, would you and Miss Moncrieff be good enough to give us again that charming duet, *Dimmi che m'ami?* I thought it quite lovely."

"Well, I should have said that I never heard two voices go less well together," said Lady Luxborough, evidently much annoyed at the conversation being stopped. However, her idea was negatived. Charles Hay bit his lips nearly through to prevent himself from laughing aloud; then sat down by Evelyn, and

made some capital pen-and-ink drawings, in which he excelled, of Basil St. John at the feet of Miss Hopkinson, and Lady Luxborough contemplating them.

Lady Frankland came down and said the doctor had just been for the second time and given a good report of Gibby ; but that still she thought she would not go to the dance at Achmelvich unless the child was much better : but the doctor should decide, as she knew he would remain in the village the whole of the next day, vaccinating, and doctoring heads, arms, and legs,—for a visit from him was a rare event, and much made of.

The party broke up earlier that evening. Evelyn sang while Basil lay on the sofa, close to the piano, in a perfectly entranced state, with his head half-buried in the cushions, wondering what would come of all this, and feeling that the best thing for him would have been to go away ten days ago. What pleasure it would be to be always with that girl—she made him feel a better, truer man. And then shadows of his former life passed through his mind ; things he had done he felt very sorry for ; now he was roused to nobler, better ideas, and he wondered how it would be if Evelyn were always with him. She sang

“ Mein Ruh ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer.”

The last words, “ *Nimmer und nimmermehr*,” rang in his

ears. He looked at her joyous face singing these melancholy words, and thought how sad it would be if grief came over such a bright creature. The tears almost stood in his eyes as she ended. Lady Frankland had contrived to disturb his reverie, and said, almost before the song was finished, "We must go to bed. Lady Luxborough has to start at nine."

"What a relief!" whispered Charlie, as he passed her. "I hope his Lordship goes outside, for his own sake."

CHAPTER XV.

OUTLYING COUSINS.

“The embattled portal arch he pass'd,
Whose ponderous grate and massy bar
Had oft roll'd back the tide of war.”

SCOTT.

THE next morning, to the infinite relief of every one, the Luxboroughs departed on their way, leaving, we must confess, very few regrets behind them. Not that he, poor man, was otherwise than a thoroughly amiable inoffensive country gentleman, and the girl quiet and unassuming, but when their backs were turned, owing to Lady Luxborough's behaviour, few ever wished for them again as inmates.

“They are gone at last, Augusta,” said Basil, as he turned away from the door, where they had all been watching the guests' departure. “Now we shall have a little peace.”

“You need not talk, Basil; I'm sure you never put yourself out in any way for them,” she said.

“Didn't I, though? that's all you know about it,”

replied Basil. "I used to have nightmares of Lady Luxborough. Blow up Charlie now, if you like. He paid her no attention, except caricaturing her. But, goodbye; I'm off to the river. It's a famous morning; the best we have had yet for fishing. Come along, Charlie."

A few hours later in the day, Evelyn Moncrieff was standing by Susan Mackenzie's side in the saloon at Achmelvich Castle, which room was to be the scene of the festivities on the following night.

The hall was in such confusion that it appeared almost hopeless to think it could be cleared, and turned into a ball-room by the next evening. The floor was strewed with branches of fir, juniper, and heather, laurels and other evergreens. A large basket of deer's-head moss stood on one chair; the next was full of hollyhocks; then another, with quantities of more delicate flowers—roses, sweet-williams. The kitchen table had been moved in, by Lady Charlotte's orders, on purpose for the people to work on, and a large cloth was carefully spread underneath; but those who had been at work seemed to prefer any other part of the room, to judge by the way in which every bit of the floor was covered, with wreaths of flowers, bundles of evergreens, balls of twine, strips of calico, and

packets of tin tacks,—all strewn in hopeless confusion.


The room was a very handsome one, and merits a special description. In the old days it had been the banqueting-hall, and had a fine timber roof, the beams of which were black with the smoke and age of many centuries; deep-set windows overlooked the lake, into which you could drop a stone some twenty feet before it touched the water. The windows themselves were mere slits, so that by daylight the room was rather a gloomy one; but now it was seldom used except for some ball or banquet, which took place by candle-light. At one end of the hall was a large glazed cupboard, containing the accumulated plate of many centuries—curious tankards, salvers, and cups, bowls and ladles for toddy; queer old-fashioned salt-cellars, each of which had a legend attached to it. Above were beautiful stags' heads, and the horns of remarkably fine roe-deer, which had been shot on the property; and the walls were decorated with old Highland claymores, dirks, shields, and arms of all kinds, tastefully arranged.

The fireplace was curious and old, more like a room in the wall, and tradition said that on one occasion, in summer, six armed men had watched behind the curtain

which was drawn across it, prepared to seize a noted guest then at the banqueting-table, whose heart was known to be black with treachery, and who meditated foul play to the chief. But now the large space was filled with flowers, tall fuchsias and oleanders. The hall was nearly sixty feet long and about thirty wide, so that there was a good deal to be done before all the space could be decorated.

There were several maids busily at work, besides footmen and stablemen in their shirt-sleeves, standing half way up long or short ladders, and calling out for string, nails, or flowers, as the case might be.

They were all very busy. Susan and Evelyn came in just in time to arrange that the Mackenzie motto should be arranged round the largest stag's head, which for the evening would represent the badge of the clan, the Caber Fe. Then Susan's monogram was placed underneath, and Volunteer flags draped round it, for Susan was very patriotic, and had raised a Volunteer company at her own expense, and the honoured flags must receive a place. There was much to arrange, and the two girls worked very hard, directing and helping busily. Susan looked up at last, and said, "I've not worked so hard since I helped my cousins to decorate St. Boniface's Church for Christmas Eve, two years ago.



I decidedly prefer these materials to work with," taking up a garland of roses and hollyhocks. "My fingers did not recover the holly for weeks. Look, Evelyn, that's pretty ; isn't it ?" she said, holding up a star of brown and pink and white hollyhocks.

"Lovely," answered Evelyn ; "but do you hear a carriage driving up ? Who can it be ?"

"What am I to do ?" said Susan, with a melancholy face. "There are those dreadful cousins of mine, the Grants, arrived. I am far too dirty to appear, and Aunt Charlotte does not know them. How much tidier you look ; you provoking girl, to keep so tidy when I get myself into such a dreadful mess. But never mind, we've done quite enough, and the servants can finish now ; so come and get washed, and then we can go to these tiresome people in the drawing-room.

The Grants, the newly-arrived guests, meantime had been ushered into the house. The party consisted of a father, two daughters, and one son. The young ladies were thoroughly strong-minded Scotch lasses, and the brother was a cornet in the — Light Dragoons, and was an individual who, from being really very shy in women's society, affected a very off-hand, free-and-easy manner, which had the effect of making him quite intolerable. His principal habit was that of pulling his

long moustache, which was of that pattern which seems to belong by nature to some complexions, long and red ; otherwise, he was rather good-looking.

His father was a real hard-headed Scot, Aberdeenshire bred and born,—having started in life with very small means, and made his own way ; principally by improving his property, and farming largely. He never forgot for an instant that he was Susan Mackenzie's father's third cousin ; and from the moment that his son was old enough to understand, he dinned into his ears that there was a young lady, his connexion, only three years younger than himself, with £16,000 a year ; and that, if he played his cards rightly, why, the money could be his. So the cousinship was much made of and talked of by the Grant family, and no opportunity lost for calling on Susan's mother during her lifetime. Constant visits had been proposed to Achmelvich, which, as the good lady had Scotch notions of hospitality, had never been declined ; but somehow, though their visits had been yearly, the Grants and Lady Charlotte had never met.

Susan inherited her mother's hospitable ways, and though she little liked the visitors,—now that they had come, she was determined to do her part as hostess, and entertain them to the best of her ability ; so she

came into the room with her nice frank manner, and bade them heartily welcome ; laughed at the elder Grant's obsequious manner ; introduced them, one and all, to Evelyn, and then to Lady Charlotte, who soon appeared, and to whom the whole family bowed and curtseyed in a manner that greatly astonished her simple-minded Ladyship.

The dragoon pulled his moustache fiercely, and at last found courage to ask Susan "if she was not awfully bored with her life down there?" to which she rather shortly answered, "Certainly not, Captain Grant, or I should not always make a point of coming down here so early, and staying so long."

"Captain Grant ! my dear Susan ; indeed, he's not a captain yet ; and besides, between cousins, such terms are simply absurd. Ca' him just by his name ; and its nae sic an ugly one either," cracked out Mr. Grant, senior, in the broadest Aberdeen dialect.

"There's one objection," said Susan, with just the slightest shade of hauteur in her voice, "that really I have not the remotest idea what your son's name may be."

"Kenneth, my dear Susan, Kenneth," continued the unabashed father ; "and I hope you will just never forget that ;" and so saying he helped himself to a large pinch of snuff out of a wooden snuff-box, at which his


son, who affected great contempt for all Scotch ways and habits, looked as much disgusted as his very inane features would allow.

"You will come in for my tenants' dance," said Susan, after a short pause, turning to the young ladies, who had sat as silent as if they had been automatons. "I hope you will not mind it."

"Mind it!" put in their father, who greatly preferred the sound of his own voice to any other; "why, my lasses are just perfect at ony o' our national dances; and maybe you'll allow Kenneth here just to open the ball wi' yoursel."

"That's quite impossible, Mr. Grant," said Susan quickly.

Here the tea came in and made a diversion, and very soon after that Susan escorted her guests to their rooms, and the evening that followed was flat and dull. Old Mr. Grant's efforts to make his son appear perfect in the eyes of the heiress failed signally, and only succeeded in producing an argument between the father and son upon some point of Scotch law, during which the ladies beat a retreat to their respective rooms.



CHAPTER XVI.

CONFIDENCES.

“Croyez-moi, ma chère, au siècle ou nous sommes
La plupart des hommes sont très-inconstans,
Sur deux aimants qu'on nous donne,
La moitié nous aime, pour passer le temps.”

It is a very curious fancy that both sexes of the human race in the upper classes have, generally alike strongly developed, and that is for sitting up at night, when Good-nights have been exchanged, and bedroom candles duly handed, all are supposed to retire to bed. But in a country house party how seldom is this the case! The young men, after a short dive into their bedrooms, reappear in every variety of dressing-gown, shooting-jacket, and smoking cap, to sit up and smoke, with or without the leave of the master of the house, as the case may be, far into the night. In these days men will smoke; and, unless you wish your rooms poisoned, it is well to provide some smoking or billiard room, where the thing may be done openly, and where, with a cigar, young men may sit and

dawdle away an hour or two talking human or equine scandal, as the mood may dictate. It is a remarkable fact that, under the influence of the hour, and maybe the protection of the candle-light, a man will plunge *in medias res* about himself, his feelings, and his flirtations, in conversation with men to whom by daylight he would not dream of saying the same thing. Most of us can remember how, under this influence and some strong brandy and soda-water, Jones, who has just joined the — Dragoons, confided one evening to us—who had that day made his acquaintance—his firm resolve, at the mature age of twenty, to have no more to do with women, having from recent experience been more than ever convinced of their heartlessness, folly, and cupidity. Such things and such confidences we have often listened to, given them their due weight, and never alluded to them by daylight.

Such are men's ways, and, as far as the gossip goes, the women's are like unto them. To-night we will follow Evelyn and Susan, who, no exception to the general rule, have parted on the landing with the words, "Do come, dear, and have a comfortable talk in my dressing-room," and accordingly now we see Evelyn in a soft, white dressing-gown, knocking at Susan's door: "Come in, dear," she answered; and when Evelyn came in she

certainly found herself in a snugger, — a large, low room, overlooking the loch; and this evening the windows were opened, and the clear harvest moon was reflected with a light more brilliant than we see in the south; a fireplace with dogs; birds in one corner of the room; two low comfortable arm-chairs on either side of the fire, which, though it was still July, burnt very brightly; a neat shelf of books, and some pretty water-colour drawings on the walls, made the room very cheerful. A basket for the dogs was in one corner of the room, and a very pretty toilet-table in front of the farthest window; and plenty of flowers were in various parts of the room. A sofa was wheeled round to the fireplace, on which Susan was sitting when Evelyn entered the room. She had a crimson wrapper thrown on in haste, the folds of which fell round her full, handsome figure, and showed it to great advantage. Her hair was still arranged as it had been during the evening; she was as yet too busy to have it touched, but was busy correcting and altering a sort of bill of fare she held in her hand, and which the housekeeper proposed to supply for the tenants' supper.

"Oh, Evelyn dear, sit here, will you? Do you see what my aunt and Mrs. Jones have provided for our supper on Thursday? It's quite impossible that, even

with any amount of champagne and double whisky, they should get through eight rounds of corned beef; but I can't alter that to-night. I can't think where they got all this beef, for we are forty miles from any beef-killing town. I suppose it came from Golspie, or else by the steamer from Glasgow. What it is to live in an out-of-the-way part of the world! Well, thank Heaven, it's only once a year; and if there is a great deal left, there are plenty of poor souls who will be too thankful to eat up the remains."

"What a busy woman you are, Susan!" said Evelyn, standing by her and putting her hand affectionately on her shoulder. "How neatly you arrange everything," she added, taking up the corrected list; "so carefully arranged. I am sure I should make a dreadful mess of all that you do so well."

"O no, you would not. I am obliged to do it, and I don't like to have to do it at all."

"Don't like the occupation or the responsibility, Susan,—which is it?"

Susan did not answer for a moment or two. "I think it's the responsibility," she said at last; "in fact, I am sure it is, for I like having plenty of occupation, and I'm sure it's a good thing for me. I should fidget myself and others to death if I had not

employment of some kind ; but when it comes to great questions of letting farms, building cottages, paying off mortgages, etc., I get out of spirits and worried, because I have no one to help or advise me. O dear, I wish I had had a brother, and then I should not have been tormented with this money, and perhaps should have married years ago, and not have had this dread of being married for what I have, and not for what I am."

"Susan, Susan, you are very foolish to think such things. Just look at yourself, and remember all the many qualities you have to command affection, and how many would be likely to care for you yourself. I am sure, if you would be less bitter in your ideas of mankind, you would be so much happier, dear."

"My dear soul," answered Susan, "you know nothing at all about the matter. Most men who are good fellows, would vote me too *prononcée*, or unfeminine, or something of that kind ; and as for patching up some needy spendthrift's fortune, as I have been often invited to do, I won't let the good old acres that I hold in trust go that way," she said gravely.

By this time Susan had worked herself into a very animated state, and very handsome she looked, with a deep colour in her cheeks, which was not a common thing with her.

A prettier picture you could hardly see than these two girls, as they were now placed. Evelyn had come and sat close by her friend on a low stool at her feet, and took Susan's hand in hers, while her head was bent on the other hand, and Evelyn's fair hair fell over the shoulders, and reached far down towards her waist, which from time to time she shook back as it fell over her eyes; and her white, well-rounded arms were visible nearly to the shoulders, as the large open sleeves fell back. "Well, Susan," she said after a pause, "I'm a bad one to give an opinion on such matters. I'm not likely to be troubled with fears on this score. O dear, the trouble I have to make both ends meet; but I always do, and generally make them lap over too a little," she said, laughing. "My dear father taught me as a child that that was the only way to be comfortable; but seriously, I do wish that men did not think so much money was necessary to happiness. I don't think Charles Hay does," she said, after thinking a moment, and turning her face to Susan, who had, however, turned in the opposite direction.

"Don't you; why not?" asked the heiress.

"Why, from several talks we have had; for, you know," she added apologetically, "that being in the house for so long with a person, and seeing them all

day in a tiny shooting-box, makes one very intimate with people."

"And so he discussed his matrimonial schemes with you, did he?" asked Susan rather bluntly.

"Yes--no--that is to say," replied Evelyn, blushing, "he was talking of Mr. St. John, and saying what a pity it was, he thought, that it was necessary he should marry some one with money, and that his grandfather and sisters had dinned it into his head ever since he was a child; and I do think it very foolish of them."

"How very fond those two young men are of each other!" said Susan; "I shall not forget Charles Hay's face that day that Basil St. John met with the accident in the swamp. It was an expression of terror, that remained on his face for several hours,--something like what I once saw on the face of one of the heroes who had returned from the Indian Mutiny, but on whom the horrors he had seen had produced such an effect that the expression was there for his life. Well, Charles Hay's was like that for some hours; and I shall never forget it, it was so unlike his usual happy, cheerful face."

"How dreadful it was! Mr. St. John told me all about it," said Evelyn with a shudder, "and he said he never could tell me how good Charles Hay had been;

and you too, Susan dear. He says you were kindness itself. I think it would have half-killed Lady Frankland had anything happened to her brother, and I believe his other sister Edith is still more devoted to him. Did you ever see her, Susan?"

"Yes, once or twice, I think. She went out with a cousin in London. I thought her an ordinary sort of girl, with nothing in her. I like Mr. St. John better far than either of his sisters, though Lady Frankland is a very kind, good sort of woman. There's one thing to be said—neither of these young men has troubled me with their attentions. I believe they rather hate me than otherwise," and she laughed rather bitterly.

"What nonsense, Susan! I don't think you would have said so, if you had heard Charles Hay the other day, when, as usual, Lady Luxborough (who is never happy, I believe, except when she is pitching into people) was finding fault with you for fishing. He got perfectly scarlet, and bit his lip nearly through, and then, without especially defending you, gave her a bit of his mind in a way that was very refreshing to hear,—to me at least, I'm afraid. Lady Frankland told him, when she went to bed, that he deserved a piece of plate as a testimonial."

"Did he, though?" said Susan. "Evelyn, do you

think him a great flirt? Aunt Charlotte and Lady Luxborough both abused him so much for it the other day."

"No, I really don't," answered Evelyn. "I know people have said so; but honestly, I think him only a very cheery, light-hearted man, who, when people are pleasant and forthcoming, meets them half-way, being determined to make the best of life, and see things *couleur de rose*."

"More than Basil St. John does, I'm sure," said Susan; then, seeing Evelyn look startled, she added, "not but that I like him very much, but then I wish he did not see things *en noir* so much. I'm sure he does not flirt, and yet I could fancy he would care very really about any one."

"Did he ever want to marry any one that you heard of?" said Evelyn.

"No, I don't think so. I think his cousin would have married him, only, though she went some lengths, she was not prepared to do the proposing part of the business, and so that did not come off. Then I used to hear people say he was after Lady Frances Gardener, but I think it was only that Lord Pendarves said she would be the very thing for him, and so he tried, but it never came to anything, and she is married to a man

for whom she does not care a straw. I remember watching Basil St. John and Lady Frances at the opera one night. Miss Hay was there too, and you never saw people all look so cross as they did. I believe Lord Pendarves had a fit of the gout when her marriage to Francis Nugent was announced."

"Poor Mr. St. John! he is so good and so thoroughly high-principled," said Evelyn; "I wish he was happily married; he seems very domestic in all his ideas. He told me the other day that London life and ways had always been uphill work with him,—that incessant pushing and striving in society was foreign to his nature."

"Ah, yes! he said that, I know," answered Susan; "only he confuses pushing on in society, which is indeed a mean thing, with pushing on in life, and not living merely to rot away the day with as little trouble as may be."

"Rot away! what a term, Susan! you speak like a man. What a good man you would have made in all but looks," Evelyn said, laughing, as she lifted a great thick plait of hair that was loosened and fell on Susan's neck.

"Evelyn, what am I to do to-morrow with that Sawney cousin of mine?" asked Susan, "and that

dreadful father ; did you ever hear anything to equal his broad Scotch ?”

“Never,” said Evelyn, “and, I am free to confess, that when he gets excited and cracks it out, as he did about the Highland emigration system, and sheep-farming, I could hardly follow him.”


“Yes ; I was amused at your puzzled face. As to the son, I don’t think anything would wake him up, except the comparative merits of Derby favourites. I’m told he was hit pretty hard last spring, and came on his father to pay ; so now he is doing penance. How men can be such idiots,” she continued in her energetic manner, “as to mix themselves up with a lot of black-legs, and people who have no scruple how they get their living, I can’t think. The only chance for the gentleman is to give up his conscience, if he means to make money by racing. I know too much about it. I had an uncle who was ruined by it, and it has left me very bitter on the subject ; but it is too late to discuss the turf and its scandals ; and I am sure a good little girl like you knows nothing about it.”

“Not much, certainly,” was her answer, smiling ; “but from being sometimes with very horsey people have heard a good deal about the matter—enough to agree with you.”

"We shall have plenty to do to-morrow," Susan said, "so now go to bed. That blessed General will be here. I'd marry him to-morrow if he asked me, such an old darling as he is. Good-night."

Evelyn's only answer was, "A nice life you would lead him."

When she got into her own room she did not immediately think of going to bed, though it was late, but sat down, opened her desk, and took out a letter,—begun nearly a week ago,—with a vague idea of finishing it; but as she caught sight of two little drawings very slightly sketched in, of the netting of the salmon pool, and another of the view from the garden at Achmelvich, she looked at them anxiously, and with more thought than such drawings seemed worth. She was recalling the way they had been done; and how Basil St. John had one Sunday sketched them on a bit of her drawing-paper, and when she said she would like to have them, had laughed and said, "O yes, certainly, if she liked; but they were not worth having, save as a recollection; did she remember the day?" and so on. And with this she thought of Basil, and wondered whether he would remember anything about her when he came to be in London again. They had had so many talks together, and she felt sure he looked on her as a great friend.



Was he anything more than that to her? and the blood came burning to her face, as she began to realize that she did care a good deal for him and his happiness. It was not being in love, she thought; but she would like to be where she could see him often, and feel he was happy and useful, and that he would often come to her for advice; and then she wondered why she felt it so very easy to talk to Basil; had she been an heiress, would he have made up to her? Then she reflected about Susan. Certainly he did not care for her. She contrasted his chaffing manner to Susan with his quiet, sometimes almost stern manner to herself. "As to falling in love with Basil, that's impossible; he never said the shadow of anything complimentary to me; and yet every now and then he seems to like to take care of me, and watches me. What an odd creature he is; and yet—and yet—how much better he is than most men! I wonder what he can be sorry for; he said the other day he would give much to have his life since he left school back again. I suppose he would like to have something to do. I am *very* sorry for him, and feel as if I should like to have been his sister. I don't think Lady Frankland is at all wise with him. She thinks all he does perfection; except when he talks to me. I am afraid she does not like that; for she almost

always calls him away to do something for her. Heigho ! what utter folly it is dreaming like this," and she looked at the drawing, which fell from her hand, and saw some writing at the back—Basil's writing. The words were those lines of which she was fond, and which she remembered having quoted to him that evening—

" Act, act in the living present,
Heart beneath and God o'erhead."

The words refreshed her. She thought it was a case of no time like the present. So she shut up all her writing and quickly prepared for bed ; read the second lesson as she never failed to do, and was soon peacefully sleeping. If in her dreams Basil St. John's image returned again and again, it was but the natural sequence, as philosophers tell us, of the influence of the engrossing thoughts of the day.

CHAPTER XVII.

A REHEARSAL.

“Hail, nimble nymph, to whom the young hussar,
The whisker'd votary of waltz and war,
His night devotes, despite of spur and boots,
A sight unmatched since Orpheus and his brutes.
Hail! spirit-stirring valse.”

BYRON.

THE following day, after dinner, they were a very merry party. The General, fortunately free from gout, was entreating Susan to teach him to dance reels, as he had the greatest wish to figure with her the next evening, while she was trying to explain to him what he would have to do; but all in vain. “Nothing but practice will do it, my dear.”

Here the Aberdeenshire laird interposed with, “I’m sure, General, my daughter and my son will be proud to stand up and teach you the figure; and it’s ay merry to see the young folks stepping out.”

Lady Charlotte volunteered to play the reel of Tulloch; a space was cleared in a few minutes for dancing,

and Charlie and the General were taking a lesson from Susan and one of the Miss Grants; Susan vainly trying, with her gown lifted above her ankles, to teach her pupils their steps. How they laughed; and how pretty Charlie thought her feet; and how graceful her ways with the General, as she vainly tried to make him do steps in which few can succeed who are not Highland bred and born. Charlie got on better than the General; at least he said he did; though Susan told him he danced like a bear on hot bricks. Still, they twirled round merrily in the reel, with their arms linked through each other's. When their hands met once by accident, Susan was startled by Charlie's earnest, warm grasp. As for Miss Grant, she danced as if her bread depended on it, with a downright determination, it seemed, that nothing should fatigue her, and a face as grave as a judge. Up and down she bounced, and in and out; twisting the General and Charlie round without ceremony. Evelyn, being tired, sat in the window out of the way, where Basil found his way to her side, rather cross, and expressing wonder that any woman could make such very ungraceful exertions; Evelyn, laughing at him, said she meant to dance a reel next night. He looked annoyed, and said he hoped she would not; then stopped, and said something about its being barbarous. Sud-

denly Lady Charlotte, the most good-natured of women, thinking the others might like a turn, as the room was cleared, began to play a valse. Without an invitation, or a word more than "Come along, Miss Moncrieff," Basil put his arm round Evelyn's waist; they valed round, regardless of how the rest of the party had disposed of themselves, and the cornet seized his moment to dance with Susan. Charlie had to put up with one of the Miss Grants, and the General, who, though he knew very little of the *valse à deux temps*, could not bear to see any girls left forlorn, politely victimized himself with the elder Miss Grant, and slowly travelled round the room,—Kenneth Grant openly voting him a bore, and calling him the luggage-train, at which Susan Mackenzie looked much annoyed. Basil and Evelyn swam round the room, both perfectly happy in the feeling that they were together, though that they hardly acknowledged to themselves. Evelyn danced beautifully, and Basil very well. At last Lady Charlotte's music stopped, and just before Basil relinquished his hold of his partner, he held her closely to him for one moment; then, depositing her on a sofa, was on the other side of the room in a moment, asking Susan for a turn, before Evelyn had recovered her surprise; but Charlie was beforehand with him; and when Basil turned round, he

saw Evelyn was begging Lady Charlotte to rest, and let her play. The good lady would not hear of it, and Evelyn was obliged to give in to Mr. Kenneth Grant's mild entreaties for one valse—Lady Charlotte meanwhile confiding to Basil, who remained by the piano, “that he really was a very nice young man, who would have a tidy little fortune, and has plate and linen left him by his grandmother, enough for a nice little dinner of eight. Quite a nice match for Evelyn.”

Basil began an answer, then stopped, then lazily turning to one of the Miss Grants, asked her for half a turn; but Lady Charlotte stopped her music, saying, “No more, young people, to-night. The General and I are going to play at piquet. You know I beat you last time we played. You remember, at Lady Luxborough's, we were playing sixpenny games, and you were very cross, General. I think the gout was coming on. I know I gave you a receipt for a poultice that my maid's father always used. Susan, will you have a round game, or some music?”

“Oh, some music, please,” said Basil; and though, when Susan and Evelyn sang, Basil seemed to be asleep in an arm-chair, he was really meditating upon a fact which was pretty clear to him, that he had done the very thing against which he had registered

a vow—*i.e.*, fallen in love with a girl who had not a shilling.

What a fool he was! Was he in love? After all, perhaps he was not, he thought; but still, twist and turn his thoughts as he might, he could only arrive at one conclusion,—that she was the very girl who would suit him, and that he had to look forward with dread to the time when he should part with her. And she—did she care for him at all? she was very frank and unaffected with him, and treated him almost like a cousin, but then she was just the same to Charlie. He was torn asunder by conflicting ideas, for, though not in the least a flirt, and not having the faintest idea of asking her to marry him, he felt he should like to think that she would be sorry to part. How lovely she looked, he thought, as she stood there by Susan's side, trying to explain to Charlie the part he was to take in the song before her; once, for a moment, when he opened his eyes, which he had closed during his meditation, he caught her eye fixed very sadly on him, and again he pondered on his lot, and again vowed that the fates were against him in every way, that nothing came right for him in his life.

Poor Basil, maybe the wrong was in the way in which he viewed life, or rather had been trained to view it.

“What nonsense it is to dream like this!” he said to himself at last. “I am only getting deeper into the mess every hour. I try to be resolute, and yet one look at that girl’s face upsets all my resolutions. Heaven forbid that I should cause her sorrow! As for Miss Mackenzie, whom my grandfather keeps writing about, and Augusta is always declaring I must marry—she is just as *unsympatica* to me as may be. Charlie seems to be very much smitten, though,” and he laughed as he saw Charlie, at Susan’s bidding, waiting on the Miss Grants as if they were houris. “What a flirt he is! He says girls meet him half-way, and so on, as an excuse, but it seems to me that he meets *them* the whole of the way. I hope he’s not caught this time, for Susan Mackenzie means to make a great marriage, I’d bet anything.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MIDNIGHT TALK.

“ Friends grow dearer, and hearts grow nearer,
Calm'd in the silent centre of night ;
And words we may say, that the full mid-day
If it should hear us would jeer outright.
Day with its din for distrust and doubt ;
Night for confidence, friendship, and love.”

Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland.

LATER that evening Basil came into Charlie's room, and found him writing. The latter had just finished a letter, and we will read it over his shoulder :—

“ MY DEAREST MOTHER,—If you were not the dearest, kindest mother that ever fellow was blessed with, I should not sit down and write now, but I'm low in my mind, for a wonder ; and, as you always help me in all my troubles, I shall write and tell you the last mess I have fallen into. Mother dear, I've been and fallen in love—more fool me !—with a girl who is as little likely to care about me as is the Empress of China—an heiress, *the* heiress of the county ; such a girl ! but what's the

use? I never would be indebted to my wife for everything, and much as Basil St. John recommends heiress-hunting, I never could agree with him. But it's a sad mess to be in, and I can't help myself one bit. I'm actually fool enough to come and stay in the house with her, and I suppose I should be kicked out if her belongings had an idea of it! Well now, I'm better for having confided this trouble to you, dear mother. Don't say a word about it. I suppose I shall come to time some day or other, and as long as I am here in the house with her I can't feel unhappy; it's the future. Well, well, other fellows have pulled through before, and I suppose I shall. I don't mean her to guess a word about it, if I can help it; maybe if I could achieve a position for myself in the world I might ask her; but what chance is there? She'll probably be a Dowager-Countess with ten children before I rise to anything like competence in the world. There, that's enough about myself. We are a pleasant party here in the house. Basil St. John, it rather strikes me, is carrying on a good deal in his quiet way with that nice girl Augusta Frankland has with her. I hear very little from him, but the people about rather comment on it. Still waters run deep. The girl has not a sou; a pity I didn't fall in love with her, or that she and my girl

could not exchange places, it would suit Basil and me both down to the ground.

"I rattle on to you, mother mine, just as ever, you see. I'm thankful to say that the rents have been well paid, and that I contrived last Lady-day to pay off that mortgage of Jenner's. Not a bad business to begin with, is it? We shall get clear in time. Tell Smith that he may let the Warren farm on the terms the man offered. I'm so glad the girls liked their Exeter balls. I hear the — Dragoons are all at their feet at least; so a great lout who is staying here tells me. *Vogue la galère*. Don't say anything about my affairs to them. God bless you, dearest mother! When all's said and done, there's nothing like a mother to tell one's troubles to.—Your ever loving son,

"CHARLIE.

"ACHMELVICH CASTLE, Aug. 8."

"P.S.—I suppose my time here is nearly up. Sir Gilbert won't stay for more than three weeks of the grouse-shooting. He says he wants to get back to his partridges; but Augusta laughs at him, and says the real reason is that he is always hoping cub-hunting may by some fortunate chance begin earlier than usual. But what a trump he is! so kind and liberal, and so considerate to his guests. He and Basil are great allies

in a queer sort of a way. Basil is fond of farming, as you know, and Sir Gilbert thinks it comes next to fox-hunting as an interest. The child is better. I was afraid he was going to be very ill; it has kept Milady upstairs nursing him. What a long postscript! I shall look you up as soon as I go south. Goodbye again."

"What! writing, Charlie? then I won't interrupt you. Good-night!"

"O no, stay, my good fellow; will you? I've been only writing to my mother. She hasn't a very lively time of it down there; besides, I've quite done," he said. "Now, sit down a bit. You don't smoke? I had a headache, and felt disinclined to join that intellectual youth down stairs."

"How well things are managed here!" said Basil. "The smoking-room seemed to me about the most comfortable I ever was in; and the wine is first-rate: so unlike a woman's household. I wonder who does it all, —Lady Charlotte, I suppose?"

"Not a bit of it," answered Charlie. "Miss Mackenzie does everything, from letting her farms downwards."

"She has a wonderful head on her shoulders," replied

Basil ; "for I never saw things better arranged in my life. I was talking to the factor yesterday, and he told me about the draining done on the property, and how the land was feued ; and all showed a very clever hand and a thoughtful, clear head, and one that considered the welfare of the tenants and of the people as the most likely means ultimately to improve the property. I thought there must be some man managing it. I did not care to ask the factor. Are you sure ?"

"Yes, Basil, quite sure," said Charles. "She—Lady Charlotte—told me. She is one in a thousand, is that girl."

"Holloa, Charlie ! is that the case ?"

"What ?"

"That Miss Mackenzie is one in a thousand ?"

"Certainly it is." And he said it rather doggedly.

Basil lifted his eyebrows, and said no more on the subject ; but after a moment began to abuse old Grant, who, he said, had been descanting on the advantage of an alliance between his son and the heiress, hinting at the rumours always afloat, and he added, "I suppose old Grant meant it to prevent *our* troubling our heads to look after her. Not that I believe she cares about him any more than about this chair. She's a world too good for him. I've heard a good deal of his doings at the Turf

Club,—high-whist, and that sort of thing; he has run through a great deal of money. As to those girls, his sisters—mere pegs to hang clothes on, and very ugly pegs too. I say, Charlie, I suppose we shall not be here very much longer. I know I am welcome to stay as long as Gilbert does; but I don't much care for the shooting; and the best of the fishing will be over in a fortnight. What a dear old place this is! I would give much to think I should see it again. I've got so fond of all the people about here, gillies and all. By the way, we are to go out sea-fishing to-morrow,—so Miss Mackenzie informed me,—to please the General. He has brought endless tackle, and was much excited on the subject of trolling for gurnet with a kill-devil. As we came only for one day, we must devote ourselves to the ladies."

"O yes, of course; I'm sure Miss Mackenzie has been very good-natured about her fishing. I've killed twenty-five fish in her water; and you have killed more. Let me see your pocket-book."

Basil pulled out a note-book, with a journal at the end, but only threw Charlie the fishing notes.

"Eighty-six fish altogether—well done! and I can only show forty-nine. Basil, what you do you do well. Why do you not make more use of the decided talent you have?"

"I can't see that salmon-fishing shows much cleverness," laughed Basil.

"No, you know I don't mean that; but you have very fair abilities. Now, when you went to Eton, you were better placed than most fellows of your age."

"Ah! I had my father then to see after me; but I cannot read."

"I like the idea of my preaching to you, Basil; but you won't mind it, though it is very like the blind leading the blind. I know you are much cleverer than I am."

"Too late," said Basil drearily; "everything always has gone wrong with me all my life."

"Basil, what an ungrateful animal you are! Why, all my life I have looked upon you as a much-to-be-envied fellow; why, you've £1500 a year, and no one to please but yourself."

"You forget my old grandfather, who has always put a spoke into the wheel about all I most wished to do," and Basil stood by the fire resting his head on his arms as he leant on the chimney-piece. "A nice mess I've made of my life."

"Well, I'm free to confess that I should not like to be an idle man, but beyond that you've not much to complain of."

"I suppose blunders and repentances have gone into the history of other people's lives before now," said Basil.

"Yes, I suppose so; but what especial blunder have you been committing now?"

"O, I don't know; I was more thinking of my Oxford days. You will admit that was a failure."

"You know, Basil, I have always told you that you are for ever and ever thinking of what people in general will say of you, instead of considering those who know your worth. Dear me, what a victim you would have been to public opinion had politics been your line! *Qu'en dira-t-on?* I never cared one rap about it myself; there's a motto I'm very fond of; and if one would act up to it it would make things a deal easier: '*Faire ce que dois adviennne que pourra.*'"

"Charlie, any one who knows you can guess that."

"It's a great comfort trying to act up to that principle; it lifts the weight a good deal off one's shoulders. Of course, every one must make mistakes; I've made heaps; but my help has been trying to act up to my lights, such as they are," said Charlie.

"It does me worlds of good to talk to you," answered Basil, "but I'm afraid I must go to bed. My head aches, and my tongue feels like the back of a Latin grammar."

" Good-night, then. It's one beauty of that business that it leaves me very little time to think of my health. As if I was light-hearted ; though just now," he added, as Basil closed the door, " I must turn in. Two A.M. ; by Jove ! pretty hours for the country, with a ball to-morrow in prospect. Basil is awfully down to-night. I wonder what's up ; that Evelyn cares a good bit about him, I expect, if I'm any judge of the matter. Holloa, there's the candle out, and a fine end to my meditations."

CHAPTER XIX.

DOLCE FAR NIENTE.

“ As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.”

Ancient Mariner.

THERE are few things so enjoyable in the world as a day on the sea, in the full summer, off the Highland coast, where you can sail or row in and out of the sea-lochs which fringe the west of Scotland, when there is just breeze enough to prevent the glare from the water dazzling and burning the eyes, and when you glide lazily on, every minute changing the view you are watching, while the shadows of the clouds throw a brilliant purple colour where a moment before all was golden light, and half the landscape is enveloped in the soft blue haze, which is often the surest sign of heat in Scotland. The coast is lovely in Ross-shire and Sutherlandshire ; here and there small islands face the mainland, many of them barren rocks, but still, the rich colour of the lichen, and bright-

yellow sea-weed and tangle, present fine contrasts of colour. Here and there a few sheep may be seen on the larger islands, picking up a scanty pasturage from the short grass growing on the less exposed rocks; flocks of sea-birds, cormorants, gulls, and wild geese, are startled from their haunts, otherwise few signs of life are to be seen. If the wind be fair, you may perhaps discover in the distance a few small herring-boats, and perhaps, at some three or four miles' interval, a faint curl of smoke may be seen ascending through the roof of some bothy without a chimney. There are few countries where such richness of colour is to be seen.

In a scene like this the little yacht belonging to Achmelvich Castle was to be seen lazily floating. The party had started with a fair breeze, and had sailed prosperously on for some five or six miles, when they had lain-to, the General had fished to his heart's content, while some of the party had landed on an island to explore.

Evelyn and Basil found themselves, after a short walk, on the farther side of the island. He had taken her there to show her a curious cave, supposed to go from one side of the island to the other, and from which, by clapping his hands and shouting, he startled flocks of wild pigeons. She was telling him some particulars of

their habits, and he laughed at her, and told her she was *blue*, and that she ought to take his neglected education in hand. Then she expressed a fancy for some wild sea-pinks growing on the edge of the water, and he called her *exigeante*, and went to get them for her. She sat down while he went to get them, and watched his tall, manly figure jumping from rock to rock. Once, when the place was steep and dangerous, she called to him and begged him to return; but he turned round and shook his head, and dropped on to the rock where the flowers grew; then picked up one or two shells lying on the stones, left there by the birds after their meal, and came back to her with his pockets full.

"What's that?" she said suddenly, as she saw he had cut a gash in his stocking, and that he was bleeding.

"Oh, nothing!" he said. "I grazed my shin against one of your bits of old red sandstone, or whatever you call them."

She put out her hand and said, "I am so very sorry I gave you this trouble, and made you hurt yourself."

He took her hand and held it clasped one moment in his, and then said, "I'd do a good deal more than that to give you a moment's pleasure." Then, recollecting himself, said, "Come along; we shall be awfully late."

And so they began to pick their way across the seaweed-covered rocks, stopping now and then to look at the view, which was perfect. In front, broken ground, with here and there a few sheep scattered about on the patches of grass, and beyond that the arm of the sea and the coast, backed by the jagged Ross-shire mountains far away in Kintail. Every now and then Evelyn stopped to pick up a sea-bird's feather, or a bright flower or bit of heather, and her companion guided her steps carefully, and helped her down the steep places. All this he did in a manner so unlike his usual *nonchalant* way of walking on in front, and leaving the others to shift for themselves as best they could, that Lady Frankland, could her sight have penetrated those few miles, would have been more surprised than pleased. Then they came in sight of Lady Charlotte and Mr. Grant, who had been enlisted by her Ladyship to pick and carry some moss-like sea-weed, much used in the North of Scotland for chest complaints. This she had induced him to go in search of, and he had reluctantly consented, but thought it a good stroke of policy to stand well with the heiress's aunt, and so they made an exploring tour of some creeks together; and the worthy lady was now panting and toiling towards the little boat

which lay in the bay, ready to convey the party back to the yacht, and was anchored about a quarter of a mile farther out to sea.

Susan and Charlie were sitting within hail, watching the General's movements with an opera-glass, and speculating on what sort of a fish he had caught each time the line was drawn up. He seemed very happy, as he had also supplied the two Miss Grants with lines, and they were having good sport. The Cornet had gone to the other side of the island, with his pea-rifle, to try and get a shot at the wild-geese, which Duncan Munro assured him were always to be found there ; but as he chose to insist on taking a half-broken retriever puppy, without a slip, contrary to Duncan's advice, he arrived just in time to see the dog rush in when he thought he had secured a very nice shot at a fine bird, which was basking on the rocks in the sun, just below him. He swore at the dog and Duncan in no measured language, and was pretty smartly rebuked by the latter for doing so. Duncan was a man who was thoroughly independent in his ideas, and if he thought anything a man did was wrong, gentleman or no gentleman, he would tell him so, and many a scrape he had got into in consequence. By degrees the whole party found themselves on board the yacht again, and congra-

tulated the General and Miss Grant on their success. They admired the beautiful fish in the baskets on the deck, and inspected one fish, that a canny lad on board called a rock-pig—a fish with a bright blue back, and with the under part a scarlet orange, and fins of the most lovely blue—and which, when first caught, made an odd grunting sound ; it was very pretty, but, being useless for food, Evelyn pleaded for its life, and to the astonishment of the boatmen it was slipped into the water again. At last they weighed anchor, and after eating their luncheon, Basil, looking round, said suddenly, “ Why, General, we’ve not gone far.” Nor had they ; the island looked much the same size, and the same points were still visible ; and, alas ! it became evident that the wind had changed, and that it was now almost a dead calm. The General and Evelyn laughed heartily at the prospect of spending the evening on the little yacht. Fortunately the long oars called sweeps were on board ; but there were no rowlocks. What was to be done ? Various experiments were made. Did the boat move a little ? The jelly-fish hardly floated by in the clear water. Charlie dropped bits of paper over the side, but they were a long time going astern.

Here was a pretty state of things : four or five miles out at sea and three o’clock in the day. There were half-

a-dozen men on board, counting the gentlemen, and they all set to work, pulling gallantly at the sweeps. Susan laughed much, and amused them with cheerful descriptions of the effect of the people arriving to dance and feast, and no hostess there. "The play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out—eh, my dear?" said the General.

"I wonder," said Susan after a bit, "whether any one of those who are coming to-night would care if I tumbled overboard and was drowned, excepting for the inconvenience of going home without their entertainment."

"Susan!" exclaimed Evelyn, "please don't talk like that; it is hard, and unlike you, really."

Charlie looked at her earnestly, and said, "Why will you take this black view of life? you are worse than Basil, and he is bad enough, I am sure. I wish you looked at things and people as I do. I think it is a very kind world, and very kind people in it, if we take them the right way, and look at them in the proper light. What do you say, General Tremaine?"

"My dear young friend," he replied gravely, "I am quite of your mind; I think that the world in general is far more kind-hearted than is usually believed, being made up of units, which units, taken one with another, are far more ready to do one a kindness than we give

them credit for ; and I also think the world's opinion of people is in the main right. I do not mean that what is called the world has a very high standard ; but I do not think it a bad guide in the minor affairs of life. And as to people regretting one's death, my dear young lady," added he, turning to Susan, "thank God, very, very few people can feel that no one will regret them. I am vain enough to think that if I died to-night some few old chums would be found to miss me at my club, and when Christmas came round that I should be wished for at one or two firesides where I have always found a welcome ; so don't listen to Basil St. John's croaking."

"Dear me," drawled the Cornet, "I expect, if I died suddenly, there are a good many who would miss me considerably when they came to Christmas, and were making up their bills." This being the nearest approach he had ever made to a joke, it struck him as so inexpressibly witty, that he laughed at it for full five minutes, thereby keeping himself fully employed, much to the relief of the company.

Still the boat drifted slowly on, till suddenly Duncan Munro exclaimed, "Ah! now she's turned, we will get on."

"Who has turned?" asked Charlie.

"Who, sir? why, the tide;" and sure enough they

were making way a little. Charlie borrowed the Cornet's pea-rifle, and began shooting at a shoal of porpoises as they rolled over and over each other in the sea, re-appearing suddenly at the point least expected.

Susan proposed they should sing, to which Evelyn, who was sitting close to the General, agreed readily. He patted her head in a gentle, affectionate way; he was very fond of her, both for her own sake, and also as the orphan child of one of his oldest friends, and she returned his affection fully, considering him almost in the light of an uncle.

"Row, boatie, row," being scouted as the regular resource of people in their circumstances, Charlie sang "The Moorish Maiden;" then they all sang "A southerly wind and a cloudy sky," with a chorus, which was followed by Susan's clear voice ringing out "Cam' ye by Athol?" to the great delight of Mr. Grant, who stamped and clapped his hands, and declared that such a true Scotch lassie was born for a Scotch husband; this he said, glowering at Basil, who he chose to suppose was making up to Susan, having overheard the General chaffing him about his pursuit of heiresses. Basil laughed in his sleeve, and then sighed, as he remembered how soon his present happiness would end.

And now the land was very near, and it was high

time they should get home ; it was nearly six o'clock, and they had several miles to drive. The evening light, as it fell across the bay, coloured all the hill-tops a warm rose-colour, giving a lovely effect of light and shade. Basil attempted a little outline on the back of a letter he had been reading ; it was from his sister Edith, asking him why he wrote so seldom, he who never missed writing every week as a rule. He reflected as he read it, and thought how the girl he was now with had engrossed his thoughts, to the exclusion of all else, even to the neglecting of his beloved salmon-fishing. He was very fond of his sisters ; but how superior Evelyn seemed to them in every way ; she was always so bright and sunny, and so easily pleased ! Now the keel of the boat grates on the sand ; and after a rapid drive they were all sent up to dress for dinner, and, more important still, for the ball.

CHAPTER XX.

PARTNERS FOR AN EVENING.

“Then open’d wide the baron’s hall,
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all ;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doff’d his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose.”

Marmion.

SUSAN found time after dressing to go to her aunt’s room, and found her in the act of clasping a diamond necklace on her fat, comfortable neck, looking radiant in green velvet, with a very full-blown head-dress, composed of a heterogeneous arrangement of blonde feathers and flowers, placed at the top of her short gray curls.

“Aunt Charlotte, Lady Frankland will come, and bring about a dozen people with her. She says some friends arrived by the steamer last night, who will come with her. Gilbert is better a good deal, poor little fellow.”

“I knew he would get better, if he took that draught I made up. But, Susan dear, ain’t you going to put on

any more ornaments than that? there's that nice little set you have of your poor mother's would look just the thing; you know, those amethysts."

"O no, Aunt Charlotte; I've put on these pearls because I am immensely proud of them,—all Scotch pearls, found in our own rivers."

Certainly no one could find fault with Susan's dress, white, with scarlet berries and stag's-head moss skillfully arranged in her dark glossy hair, setting off her small and well-shaped head. The excitement had brought a flush into her cheek, and deepened the lustre of her eyes. Lady Charlotte was evidently pleased with her appearance, and kissed her, saying, "My dear child, you do perfectly as you are; but you won't get over-tired or excited, will you? I am so pleased that dress suits you so well."

"I can return the compliment, Aunt Charlotte; you look what Mr. St. John would call 'first-rate;' but we must go down to our scrambling dinner, and not stay making pretty speeches to each other."

In the drawing-room they found the Miss Grants, brilliantly attired in cerise tarlatane gowns, with tartan bows dispersed at intervals over them. But Mr. Grant's appearance was the most remarkable. He was a man of fifty-five years of age, upon whom time had

left a strong mark; bald, high cheek-boned, with a broad, flat face, snub nose, and small, keen grey eyes; his hair was scanty, coarse, and iron-grey; his figure was short and thickset, and by no means graceful in outline. He had, as he said, arrayed himself in honour of the occasion in full Highland costume—kilt, sporran, and all complete—combined with as many silver brooches, dirks, and clasps as he could find room for, till, as some one said, “the fellow looked like a side-board.” The result of all this decoration was only to make him look more vulgar and underbred than usual. The contrast between him and Evelyn, as they stood side by side, was marked; the simple blue and white dress, and hair turned back from her face, set off the refinement and delicacy of her features in a striking manner.

Basil looked glum and solemn as he came into the room, and saw her apparently listening quite happily to the old man, little thinking how vague her answers were, as she was watching in the glass opposite to see who was coming in at the door behind her, and had seen him enter, after which Mr. Grant found her more agreeable. By degrees they all assembled, and after a very lively dinner entered the ball-room, where the tenants were already gathered. Susan went round, followed by Lady Charlotte, shaking all heartily by the

hand, and inquired after all the Davys, Duncans, and Sandys who did not appear. To one and all "our young lady" seemed equally welcome. Very soon the piper struck up a strathspey, and the ball was solemnly inaugurated by Susan's dancing with the oldest tenant, to Basil's unmitigated astonishment, and to Charlie's amusement. It was a very pretty scene, and as Susan passed Evelyn, she said, "I think our work of yesterday is very successful; look how bright our star of holly-hocks looks."

The other guests arrived very quickly, and by nine o'clock they were all there, a motley assembly. The Glen Cannisp party was voted a great acquisition. Sir Gilbert threw himself with all his heart into the evening's business, and was seen snapping his fingers, and shouting the peculiar "Heigh! heigh! heigh!"—with which Scotchmen accompany their national dance,—as if he had never done anything else. He looked very happy and quite in his element dancing with Susan. Charlie, finding his only chance of seeing her was to dance *vis-à-vis* to her, went up to Evelyn, who, he saw, was sitting in a corner with Basil, and, after one or two entreaties, succeeded, to Basil's disgust, in carrying her off as his partner. He looked much annoyed at her joining in such an ungraceful dance, as he con-

sidered it ; and only just remembered, as she was moving off, that if he wanted her to dance with him, he must first ask her, so he said, " I suppose they will let us have a valse some time in the evening, Miss Moncrieff—may I dance it with you ? "

" Not unless you look less bored and miserable," she answered, laughing ; and Charles, as he led her away, said, " What a pity that Basil always takes to that careless and put-out manner, if things don't exactly come into his ideas, and suit his tastes ! "

" I don't think he does himself justice," said Evelyn ; " but now we must dance, and not talk. Fortunately, this is not a genuine Highland lot, so they won't look daggers at us if we do make mistakes. "

The room was quite full, and the lads and lasses dancing merrily. The costumes were very effective, for almost all the men, old and young, were in full Highland dress, and though the Mackay and Mackenzie tartan predominated, there was here and there a Royal Stuart or Gordon dress to enliven the scene.

They screeched and shouted and danced *con amore*. The effect of the gay dresses in the well-lighted rooms was very striking. They all danced well, having had many years' training, for even the poorest and roughest-looking children in the Highland cottages

attend the dancing-school regularly, and all through the long winter meet once a week at least to practise in the evening. It is the same in all classes in the Highlands; and the wives and daughters of the farmers danced with an ease and lightness that few London belles could rival. At one moment in the reel the shouting was so vociferous that an old French gentleman, who was staying with the Franklands for that night, could not imagine that these unearthly sounds could be anything but the result of a great quarrel, and turned to Lady Charlotte, saying, *Mais où sont donc les autorités?* at which she laughed heartily, and tried to express to him, in her very indifferent French, that it was only a sign of exuberant joy and spirits, on which he shrugged his shoulders, and murmured something about *un peuple bizarre*. At last the bagpipes stopped in the sudden way they always do, and the panting dancers adjourned to the tea-room, where, in addition to English luxuries, was plenty of hot toddy, very popular with all parties.

After a few minutes' pause a valse was played by the fiddlers, and as Basil led away Evelyn he had the happiness of feeling that she was his property for a little while; and he claimed her with a rather penitent face, and was more tender and gentle in manner than he had

yet been. In a pause of the dance, he said, as he took the bunch of forget-me-nots from her hand, as if to look at it, "You will give me another dance, won't you?" adding, as he broke off a bit of the flower and put it in his waistcoat-pocket, "I may, mayn't I? I should like something to remember this evening by."

Evelyn felt brimming over with happiness, but turned scarlet as she saw Lady Frankland just behind her, who came up, saying to Basil, in a rather dry voice, "You are very rude, Basil, not to ask Susan Mackenzie to dance. I asked her why she would not dance with you, and her answer was, 'He has not asked me;' really, you might be a little more civil than that."

"Nonsense, Augusta; I shall ask her sometime. There is that genius, Grant, now devoting himself to her." And as he moved away with Evelyn, he added, "Why can't Augusta leave people alone to enjoy themselves?"

Evelyn told him his sister was quite right; and that he must be civil to his hostess. He took no notice of her remark, and presently said, "Will you give me a photograph of yourself?"

"O yes! if you care to have it, I will, with pleasure."

"Care to have it!" he exclaimed vehemently; "of course I do. I am not one of those people who are in-

troduced to a girl at a dinner party, and ask her for her photograph before they have got half-way down-stairs to dinner. But don't let's waste any of this delicious valse. What good music these people are playing!"

"Susan chose it all some time ago; and you see you need not have looked so cross about the valse; we are having a good long one."

"I wish it would last all night," he replied. "I think you and I hit it off uncommonly well; and I so seldom find any one who dances my pace."

"And I suppose you never take the trouble to try and dance theirs?" and Evelyn smiled as she looked up in his face.

"You are very hard upon me, Miss Moncrieff. You are always implying I am spoilt or selfish. There now, that valse is ended. Heigho! when shall I dance again with you after to-night? Will you come and have some tea?"

"Next London season, if we are both alive, I hope; and, thank you—no tea. I'll go back to Lady Frankland, who, I am sure, is annoyed, her manner was so different to me to-night; and I am not aware of having done anything to annoy her. I would not do so on any account. She is generally the kindest of the kind to me. Go and dance with Susan, will you?"

"I'll do everything you ask me. You'll not forget your promise of keeping another valse for me. *Chacun prend son plaisir où il le trouve* is to my mind the truest proverb in any language; and mine certainly would not be found in dancing reels. Eugh!" he added, as the reel of Tulloch greeted his ears. "What abominable sounds! I shall go and sit in a corner and think."

"Holloa, Basil!" called out Charlie, as he passed; "isn't this capital fun? Come and dance this."

"Not I, indeed." And he was wandering about the room, when Augusta Frankland and the General caught him, and scolded him for looking so glum; and Lady Frankland carried him off, saying she wanted tea, and having got him to herself, began, "How well those two girls look, don't they, Basil?"

"Which two?" he asked.

"Oh, Susan Mackenzie and Evelyn. Which do you think the best-looking?" she added, as she stirred her tea, and apparently attached no importance to the answer. "Some more cream, please."

"I don't think either of them beauties. You know Miss Mackenzie is too dark to suit my taste; but she's a splendid figure of a woman—a fine animal."

"Don't, Basil; I won't have girls talked about like

that. And pray, is Evelyn another fine animal?" she continued, not looking at him directly.

He flushed rather, and said drily, as he put out his arm to lead her away from the tea-table, "She has a very nice figure, and I think looks very well to-night."

Lady Frankland then said, "You are flirting very much with her. Don't turn her head, poor little girl; because you know you could not dream of marrying her, and she won't know what you mean."

"I flirt! You know I never did such a thing in my life, Augusta. That's the nonsensical way you women talk. Why can't a man talk to a nice, sensible girl without supposing himself in love with her, or her with him?" answered her brother.

"Well, you know your own affairs best, Basil; but if I thought it was the case, I should bitterly repent having brought her down here. You must go and dance; really it is so very ill-bred to stick against the wall, and only dance when the fancy takes you."

"How you do lecture one, Augusta! Do look at those people! Nobody will persuade me that that is a sensible way for folks to behave in this nineteenth century of ours."

His sister answered, "It is very lively and merry to

look at, and I am sure they enjoy it. As for Gilbert, I have not seen him in such spirits for an age. Look at him now ; would you not think he was a real Highlander ?” and certainly he and all the others seemed to be dancing with considerable zest, and the next dance, a polka, seemed to please them equally. Later in the evening, General Tremaine might have been seen proudly leading Evelyn to the top of the room to dance a quadrille. He was always very kind in his manner to her, and this evening particularly so. He fancied he felt a fatherly affection for her, and as yet had not found out that something warmer was creeping into his feeling for her. The only thing that might have made him guess that this girl was very dear to him was, that he had a keener insight into Basil’s state of mind than Basil himself had ; and from his constantly watching Evelyn, he could almost tell that her thoughts were engrossed by Basil at a time when she hardly knew it herself. It never occurred to the General that at his age, fifty-six, he could be in love again ; he only thought of Evelyn’s happiness. He thought Basil would make her a good husband, for he knew and appreciated his good qualities, and felt how much his faults were owing to the circumstances of his education, combined with his peculiar temperament. He rejoiced now to see how

bright and joyous she looked, and to hear the murmurs of admiration as she moved about.

Time wore on. A country dance was the prelude to the supper, which was substantial enough to suit the appetites of guests who had dined early, and who had since had four hours' hard dancing. The rounds of corned beef and other solid viands loaded the table, in addition to lighter delicacies. It was a sit-down supper. Susan was led in by Sir Gilbert, and as she went in said to him, "Please cut the speeches short, if you can." Her health was proposed by the oldest tenant, and drunk with full Highland honours, all the men standing on their chairs, with one foot on the table. Susan first had tears in her eyes, and then turned very pale, as he spoke touchingly of their love for their young lady, and then of their great wish to see her married, and an heir born to the old name and estates. Charlie watched her with intense admiration as, declining Mr. Grant's offer to return thanks for her, she got up and said a few words of heartfelt gratitude to the company, adding that they must bear with her alone, for she did not think she should change her state at present; and then, filling a cup to their healths, she said she hoped another year to see all her old friends again, and emptying it, she gracefully turned the last drop on her

thumb-nail (in Highland fashion), at which the applause was unbounded, under cover of which the ladies retired, leaving the gentlemen to follow how and when they liked.

Kenneth Grant, under the influence of his father's prompting, and unlimited toddy, was getting unpleasantly demonstrative, and as she passed muttered something about her good looks, which brought the blood to her cheeks, as he asked her for a dance by and bye.

"I am afraid I can't promise, Mr. Grant," she replied, and he rolled back again into the supper-room, regardless of his father's remarks that no one looked so well as Kenneth did dancing with Susan. Once again Basil and Evelyn whirled round together, and very close he held her again to his side for an instant before they finally stopped. It was a sweet, pleasant feeling, that he cared for her, which was gradually stealing over Evelyn; there was something very flattering in knowing that he listened to her opinion, asked her advice about his plans, and deferred to her in all those imperceptible little matters which only the eye that loves can see.

It was bright daylight, nearly six o'clock, before the party broke up, and the last of the company departed, leaving only the guests in the house. Then, as they

turned to go upstairs, with the sun shining full in their faces, Evelyn and Susan declared it was a shame to go to bed; but Lady Charlotte vetoed their idea of going for a ride instead. As they reached the top of the stairs, they heard the Cornet grumbling in the hall that he could not go to bed unless some one brought him a bedroom candle, which, as the sun shone full in his face, tickled Susan and Evelyn's fancy immensely, and they retired in fits of laughter to their rooms. Luckily his father had already gone to bed, so he did not witness his son's discomfiture, and, fortunately for himself, remained under the impression that his son had rather made his way well with the heiress than otherwise.

CHAPTER XXI.

A RESCUE.

“Has not the sun withdrawn his wintry beam,
And darkness quench'd the twilight dying gleam ;
And yet what sudden floods of bursting light,
Dispel with lurid day the gloom of night.”

EUGENIUS ROACH—*Rejected Addresses.*

“A little fire is quickly trodden out,
Which, being suffered, rivers cannot quench.”

SHAKESPEARE'S *Henry IV.*

THE party had all returned from Achmelvich some days, and were hard at work fishing and discussing the future shooting prospects. It had been a long hot day at the lodge, and the party were all more or less tired. The General had been talking much to Evelyn, telling her somewhat of his former life and his experiences when in the Guards, and had been laughing at her for thinking he could remember the Cato Street conspiracy, and for asking if he had been at the siege of Badajos, saying she had put a good fifteen years on to his age. Basil sat by drawing, and listening to her well-directed questions, and wondering how, in so short a life, she

had contrived to acquire so much information. Lady Frankland had gone up to the nursery, and her guests all dropped off early to bed.

Basil and Charles sat up a short time only in their rooms, both were dead-beat from the heat of the sun and a long fruitless day's fishing. Charles was anxious about a promised day's deer-stalking, which had been given him by a distant laird, and was eagerly descanting upon the respective merits of Purdey's and Lancaster's breech-loading rifles, when he looked up and saw Basil fast asleep. Whereupon he thought he might as well give up his lecture ; so to bed they went, and soon the whole household was wrapped in sleep. Evelyn's room was over the front entrance ; she was asleep, and dreaming that Basil was leading her up a narrow path to a little church no bigger than a doll's house, into which she had to enter, and which seemed to be surrounded with Highlanders, and full of dogs, who barked and thumped at the church door ; and the nearer she got the more they thumped, and then one dog called out loudly, and Evelyn awoke with a start. Sure enough there was a loud knocking at the door underneath, and a call of " Fire !" Evelyn sat up in bed and listened. Was it a false alarm made by a drunken gillie ? They often heard strange noises and shouts at night. No ; it came again,

"Fire!" She sprang out of bed. There was not a sound inside the house. She half-dressed herself, then threw a shawl over her shoulders, and flew to Charlie's room, which was the nearest, Lady Frankland's being at the other end of the house. She knocked hard, no answer—and then, after repeating her knock several times, a drowsy voice saying, "Holloa! what's up?" came from under the bed-clothes. "It's Evelyn, Mr. Hay; there is a fire; I don't know where;" and on she ran to Sir Gilbert, calling out "Fire!" as she went along. He was more easily waked. Still no one knew where the fire was, except that it was not in the house. Presently the butler came up to her saying, "Oh, Miss Moncrieff, it is in poor Macintosh's house; he is away, and there are two children in the house." She ran out, and sure enough there was the fire, about three hundred yards from the lodge, in a two-storied cottage, which was the small shop of the place, and which they had all often laughed at as being called the "general merchant's," professing to be in itself the Bond Street of the place. A number of people were running towards it in the vain hope of saving some of the goods. Evelyn stood at the door, and was soon joined by Charlie and Sir Gilbert, who both, however, ran on with the other folks, never looking to see if she followed them. Sir

Gilbert called out to Duncan Munro as they approached the building, "Are the children all out? will the floor bear?"

"Ou ay, Sir Gilbert, I think the children are all out; but there's a little servant lassie sleeps in the back-room, and they are now trying to get the ladders to reach her."

Basil at this instant joined the group. He heard Duncan's words, saw Sir Gilbert's movement as if to go and look after the girl himself, and he put his hand on his arm, saying, "No, Gilbert, let me try; it is little use I am to any one in the world, and besides, you have Augusta and the chicks."

Evelyn turned deadly pale, and unconsciously murmured, "O Basil!" He turned to her with a grateful look, and then taking his pocket-handkerchief, he dipped it in one of the buckets of water standing by, wrapped it loosely round his mouth and nose, and walked away to the side of the house where the ladder was resting. The whole building was now in flames. The flames were bursting out of the lower windows, the whole front of the house was unapproachable, and as some portion of the most combustible stores caught fire, the flames poured out still more fiercely. The people chattered and screamed, and all gave different opinions. It was hopeless to attempt to put it out, there being no fire-engines within fifty miles; and the fire, even when first

discovered, was too far advanced for any quantity of water that could be brought in buckets to be of use, even though the river flowed within ten yards of the house.

The flames crackled and hissed ; and as the beams fell in, a shower of sparks and a thick black smoke obscured the view for a moment. Those below could plainly hear in the upper room cries for help. The ladder against the wall was very short ; still, Basil was tall and strong. The men instinctively made way for him, as they ever will do for a gentleman in an emergency. " Give me a rope, if you have one handy," he cried ; and in a moment, from one of the fishing-boats by the river side, a rope was produced. Charlie at this moment ran up, his face black with smoke. He had vainly been trying a window which he had found on the east side.

Basil called out to him, " Now, Charlie, be ready to help me. I hope to be able to lower the girl with this rope, and you stand on the ladder to help."

As he climbed the ladder, the wind blew gusts of smoke in his eyes, half blinding him, but fortunately the fire was not much on that side of the house. Tall as he was, he could only reach the window-sill with his hands, even when he had reached the top of the ladder. The little girl was so terrified, she could hardly understand what he said to her. The floor was already on

fire in one corner of the room, and she was almost blinded with the smoke and heat.

"Get on to the window-sill," screamed Basil. At the moment he fortunately spied just above him a large stone projecting from the wall some four inches beyond the others, and by an almost superhuman effort he raised himself to it, and then sprang on to the window-sill. Though he was hardly aware of it at the time, he strained his left wrist severely; but the girl was the only object of his thoughts at that moment. Seeing she was stupified from fright, he jumped into the room to help her. The air in the handkerchief over his mouth now served him in good stead. He stood in the flaming room, and secured the rope round the child's waist, and carried her to the window; and holding the other end in as firm a grasp as his maimed hand would allow, he lowered her carefully to Charlie, who caught her, and in a moment placed her on the ground, and Basil soon stood by her side.

The people cheered him heartily. The mother of the girl, who just then came up, threw herself on her knees before him, showering blessings on his head in Gaelic. But in a moment Basil disengaged himself from the crowd that pressed upon him, and was round at the other side of the house looking for Evelyn, who he

knew would not care what danger she went into, if she thought she could be of use.

He found the whole lodge party assembled there ; and now that the people were all rescued, and that there was no use trying to save any more of the furniture, they had time to look about them. The scene was a strange one : the moon shining with a clear, silver light, and the stars beaming and twinkling with the brightness peculiar to northern latitudes ; the sea, quite calm, reflecting the moon's rays ; and beyond the bay, the outline of the hills clearly marked against the sky. On the other side the fire was smouldering, and bursting out into little flames now and then. The fire had been so fierce, that a barrel of water standing near the house caught fire on the outside, and presented the strange spectacle of a flaming barrel of water.¹ The people were running about, trying to put away the few things that had been saved, while one or two were trying in vain to comfort and help the poor woman who had so suddenly lost her all, and whose husband must be greeted on his return from the Lewes with the news that they were ruined. The poor soul was quite stunned by the sudden calamity, and could only rock herself and moan in answer to Lady Frankland's promises of help.

¹ Fact.

Now that the excitement was over, the party were much struck with the comical appearance that they themselves presented. Charlie and Evelyn were pretty tidy, but the General, in his hurry, had put on his wide-awake over his night-cap, and tied a stocking round his throat. Sir Gilbert's costume also looked very queer, and Lady Frankland was trying to put him to rights. Charlie turned to Basil presently, and asked him how his hand was.

"Very painful," he replied; "I think it is sprained as well as bruised."

"How did it get hurt?" asked Evelyn; and then for the first time she heard that Basil had saved the child's life. The tears stood in her eyes, and as she took his hand to bind it up, she unconsciously murmured, "So very brave." One scalding tear dropped on his hand, and it required all the moral courage Basil could muster to restrain him from telling her all his love for her then and there.


"I am not worth fashing after. You are too kind to me, and will make me miss you too much," he said.

Then came the crushing thought of what would happen when they had to part. Poor Basil! he had failed, as he had ever done, in firmness and moral courage. He now felt how desperately in love he was with

Evelyn. He had not the courage to run the risk of losing nearly all his means by marrying against his grandfather's wishes, and yet could not make up his mind to go away. They were strange feelings that tormented him as they walked slowly homeward in the moonlight; for now the fire was nearly out, Sir Gilbert ordered them all "to get home as fast as they could, and into bed before they **had** rheumatism." They did as they were bid, but Basil lay tossing about, unable to sleep, with Evelyn's face haunting him; and the one idea, how should he get out of his present difficulty, before him. Should he ask Charlie's advice? What use was it? He knew beforehand the answer he should get: "If you like the girl, and she likes you, don't throw away your happiness, but make the most of small means, if your grandfather does cut off your allowance."

"No; it is no use asking him," Basil said to himself. "I will be very careful, and keep out of the girl's way. God grant she does not care for me, poor little soul."

He felt truly miserable; and as he dozed and woke again and again, it was always with the same weary, sad feeling. He was even glad of the pain in his hand, which was very severe, to distract his thoughts from dwelling on that one perplexing subject.



CHAPTER XXII.


HEARTACHES.

“ Weak and irresolute is man ;
The purpose of to-day,
Woven with pain into his ~~plan~~,
To-morrow rends away.”

COWPER.

Two days afterwards, when the party at Glen Canisp were assembled at breakfast, a discussion took place as to the best means of helping the poor man whose house was burnt down. Lady Frankland told them of the utterly crushed state of despair in which she had found him, crouched in a corner of a neighbour's house, completely stupified with grief, and unable to attend to, or understand any plans for his help, —thoroughly stunned and broken-hearted. They settled to raise a subscription, and Sir Gilbert, who was always open-handed in matters of charity, headed it largely, collected money from all his party, and then said that his wife and Evelyn should write to various rich friends, “And make them shell out, my dear,” he added. Susan Mackenzie also had agreed to write, as, though her

property did not extend to Glen Cannisp, she was always ready to help in an emergency. They all lingered over the remains of the breakfast, waiting for the post, which was unusually late. Basil's lame hand put fishing entirely out of the question for him, and the others were never in a great hurry to be off. The letters came in the course of time, and they were soon all absorbed in their respective shares. Basil took up his, laughed as he read a very demonstrative letter from his cousin, Miss Hay, who lectured him for his long silence, and hinted at his near neighbourhood to dangerous and attractive heiresses, and asked what made him neglect to write to her; related various bits of gossip and scandal which Basil thought a young girl might as well have left out. He looked at Evelyn and thought she would never write like that; he repeated several messages to Charlie, then looked at his other letters; one was from his sister Edith, full of local news. He wondered he ever could have cared to hear about such people. The last he opened was one directed in a strange hand, which, after the fashion of people in general, he turned over and over, then looked at the seal and post-mark, wondering from whom it could be; he at last came to the conclusion he had better open it to see, and read as follows:—



"DEAR BOY,—I am too ill to write myself, so Brown is writing for me. Come up directly, if you wish to see me alive. I have got a fit of internal gout which I fancy will carry me off this time. Well, I leave little to regret in the world, except you, and the fact of your being a bachelor. Sorry to spoil sport.—As ever, yours,

"PENDARVES.

"BERKELEY SQUARE, *Friday*."

With this came a note from the doctor, saying that "Lord Pendarves was very ill; that he had little hopes of his ultimate recovery, though he had before rallied from attacks nearly as bad, and that his great wish was to see Basil again."

Poor Basil! he was very fond of his old grandfather, and till lately had cared more about him than any one, except his sisters; but now, when he had read to the end, before he said a word, he looked across the table at Evelyn. She, who had been watching his falling countenance, and felt by instinct he had had bad news, sat holding her breath, and waiting anxiously for him to speak. He smiled sadly at her, and then sighing, as he turned to Lady Frankland—who had been too much engrossed by her own letters to attend to this by-play—he said, "Augusta, there's always a break-up to my

pleasures ; I hear from Berkeley Square that our grandfather is seriously ill, and I must go to him."

"Oh, Basil!" she exclaimed, very much shocked. "Poor man, is he so ill as that? He has always been so kind to us all; I am so sorry. Gilbert, do you hear Basil must leave us, and why? Let me see the letter, Basil."

"Yes, my dear," answered her husband, "and very sorry I am for his going, and more so for the reason; but I am sure he ought to go."

"O yes, of course," said Basil; "I never dreamt of not going; I will start by the boat to-morrow; that is the best way, I think."

"Yes, on the whole, you will be sooner in town by going from here to Glasgow, and thence to London."

Evelyn sat speechless, with a dead weight on her heart. Basil had not dared look her way when he made this announcement; but the General, who had watched her anxiously, guessed what was passing in her mind, and leant forward to hide her from view, and at the same time began an earnest conversation with Lady Frankland about Lord Pendarves, and asked to see the doctor's letter. He succeeded in shielding Evelyn from remark. She could not have spoken coherently if addressed, for the thought of what parting with Basil

would be had come on her like a thunderbolt. She was motionless, and did not even look up.

As for Lady Frankland, after the first feeling of sorrow at the idea of losing her grandfather, her next was one of great relief that Basil should be parted from Evelyn, for she had been at her wit's end to know what to do. She was very fond of Evelyn, and would be sorry to cause her pain in any way, but the thought of *her* unhappiness was as nothing compared to her determination that Basil should not marry that girl. She little guessed how deep was the affection on both sides, but imagined it was a case in which, if he went on seeing much of the girl, he might get involved, and so, as she considered, entangled into marrying her; for having brought them both down to Scotland, the party could not disperse as an ordinary country-house party might.

Charlie expressed his dissatisfaction plainly and openly, and grumbled loudly; said he should not attempt to fish again; and as for shooting, he would see it all hanged first; till the General told him he was hardly civil to those left behind, whereupon he only laughed, and said he was cross, and meant to remain so.

After much discussion, it was settled to spend that one remaining day in an expedition to a distant loch,

and fish for trout. Basil said he must go and see about his things being packed for the next day, and left the room ostensibly for that purpose, but in reality to be by himself to think.

The rest of the party dispersed to prepare for their expedition. As it was the last day of their being together, Lady Frankland did not trouble herself to interfere with them, but left them to settle how they would go.

The General found his thoughts dwelling much upon Evelyn, and her prospects of happiness if she should marry Basil. He desired nothing so much as her welfare, even though it should involve the giving up of the dream which was beginning to cross his mind. He was too unselfish to let that come across him as a regret.

The expedition was one of the ride-and-tie sort; the ladies shared in turn a rough Highland pony. Evelyn walked with Charlie to the loch. Basil had gone on with the General, and they were talking of the old peer, reversions, mortgages. This Basil did on purpose, because he dared not trust himself with Evelyn. Charlie and she talked earnestly, but not of Basil; he was longing to tell her, what she had already found out, that his whole heart and thoughts were centred in Susan Mackenzie. She had guessed this long ago,

and in consequence had been able to talk to him in a much more easy and unrestrained way than she could have done to a man whose affections were free. They began by discussing the obnoxious Grants and their proceedings. Evelyn was determined to think of and attend to Charlie in spite of the cruel weight on her own heart, and, like a true woman, she was soon able to give him her full attention, understanding all he implied ; for he could not bring himself to say plainly what was in his thoughts. He spoke of his home and his mother, and how much he wished that he was free to act as he liked in life ; and then he talked of money and its responsibilities, and of his firm belief that there was work of some kind for every soul in the world,—passive and unseen work very often, but still enough to prevent the necessity of any one feeling quite useless. Evelyn thoroughly agreed with him, and told him how she had found that out in the house where she lived, and where the society was uncongenial, and that every fresh interest she had was a help to her, and made new occupation for her. “And many have laughed at the smattering of things I know,” she added ; “but it seems to me no knowledge can be useless ; and the more interest one can take in things, the more chances of happiness ; so I try to care about everything I come

across. Mr. Hay, I think if men did not run in such desperately deep grooves they would be happier and better too."

"Few men have the courage or energy to leave the groove, Miss Moncrieff."

"Few men have, and but few women. But understand, please, the last thing I admire or wish to be is a strong-minded woman; but at the same time, I think they are far too often treated by men as mere toys or dolls, incapable of caring for anything but themselves or their clothes."

So they talked on, poor Evelyn striving to feel as well as appear interested in Charlie's affairs, while her whole heart was with Basil.

The boat into which the four presently got was lying by the shore. The General, who was extremely keen about the sport, fished from it, while Lady Frankland sat on the shore, watching Sir Gilbert throw his line.

A dim, blue haze hung over the distance, magnifying the size of the mountains, and giving a soft, peaceful look to the scene, which was very lovely. After they had been in the boat some little time, Charlie turned to his cousin, saying, "What a contrast, Basil, to think of the view you will have in forty-eight hours, when, I suppose, you will be in London!"

Basil, who had hardly spoken since he got into the boat, had been steering, with his thoughts far otherwise occupied.

"Don't, Charlie, talk of it; it's bad enough when it does come, without thinking of it beforehand."

"Nonsense, Basil; what is the use of being down in your luck? You'll find your grandfather much better; and will probably spend the night at Pratt's, hearing the latest news, and amusing yourself very well."

"Now, Charlie, you know I hate Pratt's, and never feel in my element among a lot of London fellows. If my grandfather is better, which I can hardly hope, I shall, as soon as possible, run down and see Edith."

"When shall we three,—no, four,—meet again?" said Charlie, smiling. "Next season, in Rotten Row? That's an awfully long time to look forward to."

"Don't talk of plans; it makes me wretched," sighed Basil.

Evelyn's head was bent over the side of the boat, while she was trailing her pocket-handkerchief in the water, apparently to wash out the stains of mud left by the ferns Charles had got for her, but really because she did not dare look up. Her eyes had filled with tears while Charlie was speaking. She did not speak, and was much relieved when it was pronounced time to

land and walk home. Lady Frankland and Sir Gilbert had left word with one of the gillies that they had gone home, finding it cold. The General, it so happened, wished to set some night-lines, and Charlie volunteered to go with him, saying, as they turned away, "You go slowly home, and we shall soon catch you up."

The General seemed rather sorry for this arrangement, but he could not refuse Charlie's company, so they started off. Evelyn and Basil remained standing by the water's edge, hardly knowing why, both of them glad of yet dreading their walk together alone. At last he said, "Well, I suppose I must say goodbye to this lovely view, as well as to all else that has been so pleasant. Come along; we shall be late." They turned away, leaving the gillies gossiping behind them. There are few people more prone to gossip than idle Highlanders; and Basil and Evelyn's affairs were well discussed by them that evening. They all settled it would be a match; "And a bonny bride she will make him."

The two walked on silently for nearly half-a-mile, both having too much in their hearts to risk common conversation. At last Basil, who had been watching his companion anxiously, began, "I don't think I ever was so happy as I have been here this summer; and now comes this smash to all that is so pleasant."

"Everything pleasant must come to an end sometime," replied Evelyn. "And it's best to take the view that whatever is, is best; you will be very happy if your grandfather gets better, and you are with your sister Edith."

"Oh, Edith is all very well; but, but—" and here he stopped short, coloured, and said, as he saw her start and her breath come quickly, "I wonder whether you will ever think of all our walks and talks up here, when you are back again at home?"

"I shall often think of this dear old place," said Evelyn; "I have been so intensely happy. You know that my home life is not very bright; not that I set up as *une femme incomprise*, but I have found it so pleasant to have so kind a companion as Lady Frankland, only now, I think somehow she has had enough of me, don't you?"

"Enough of you!" Basil answered passionately. "Evelyn, Miss Moncrieff, I do wish you knew how much I care for and value your friendship; it has been so new to me to talk to a woman, and find that they can care about all sorts of things, and enter into everything as you do. I wish I had some little thing to remember it all by—not that I want a reminder, though. Will you give me those flowers?" he said suddenly.

"No, I won't do that; here, I will give you this, if you care to have it," and she unfastened a little blue enamelled horse-shoe from her watch-chain; "it will bring you good luck, I hope."

"Thank you, indeed. I will never take it off my watch-chain, and when I look at it, it will cheer me with the thought that I have one friend in the world;" and, as he took the little trinket from her hand, he could not but see that it shook, and that a deep colour was in her cheeks. He bit his lips, and said "I'm the most miserable brute alive," and then lapsed into silence, only casting from time to time furtive glances at his companion. He felt that she was the only woman in the world to him, and he realized it now more and more every moment. Words trembled on his lips, and the blood ran surging and throbbing through his veins. Still, he kept command over himself, and though he knew he loved her passionately, he was unwilling to risk himself and his position with his grandfather. He did not mean to be selfish; he was only determined to carry out that which a long course of education had led him to think was the right thing for him to do. It gave him little pleasure to feel, as he now could not but guess, that he had won the affections of that bright young soul. They walked on side by side, he thinking

of her perfect sweetness and gentleness; and she wondering why she felt so utterly unable to talk.

They were interrupted in their meditations by the General's voice; he had taken a short cut, and came up just in time for them to walk up to the house together. He was sorry to see Basil's sad face, and hardly knew what to make of it, but he chattered away, and told various stories of wonderful hauls of fishes he had had in bygone days.

They soon reached the lodge. The General and Charlie were both wet and very dirty, and went at once to their rooms.

Lady Frankland, who from the window had seen them approaching, called from the top of the stairs to Evelyn, and told her that Susan Mackenzie had sent to ask them to go over the next day but one, and if she liked to go, would she write an answer at once? The note was on the drawing-room chimney-piece.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FIRST LOVE.

“ How delicious is the winning
Of a kiss at love's beginning,
When two mutual hearts are sighing
For the knot there 's no untying !”

CAMPBELL.

“ Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.”

HARDLY thinking or caring much about the invitation, Evelyn went down again, and opened the drawing-room door. Basil was standing near the window, and did not turn when she came in ; but while she was looking about the room for the note, he went up to the piano and began turning over the music that lay on it. He looked as thoroughly unhappy and miserable as a man could look.

Evelyn found the letter, and was kneeling down by the table to write a hurried answer ; but though there was little enough to say, the words came not, and the pen lay idly in her fingers ; presently she began a few words.

Basil, who had watched her the whole time, now suddenly rested his arms on the piano, and bent his head over them with almost a groan. Evelyn started and looked round at him. "Mr. St. John, what is it? are you ill? Shall I fetch Lady Frankland?" she said, getting up and standing near him. He did not answer. "Do tell me what is the matter; have you had worse news of your grandfather?" Still no answer. She stood there, sorely puzzled and very sad.

At last he lifted his head and looked at her with an earnest gaze, drinking in the sweet beauty of her face. She felt troubled, and was turning away, when, before she could move, his arm was round her waist. "My darling, my darling, God help me, but I cannot leave you so."

"O Basil," was all she said. Her head sank on his shoulder, and for some moments no word was spoken between them. They were both too perfectly and intensely happy for words; too much overwhelmed with the happiness that seemed dawning on them, and with the feeling that at last each one knew how the other was cared for.

Evelyn spoke first: "So you do care a little for me, Basil?"

"My own," was all Basil could say, as he looked

down into the deep blue eyes lifted so lovingly to his, "did you ever think I did not?"

"I don't care now what comes in my life," said Evelyn, when they had talked a little while; "nothing can ever make me change, I trust you so entirely. What will your sister say?"

"My soul, we must not tell any one yet. Will you be content to wait a little while, with this great happiness known to ourselves only? My treasure, I don't think I should think you as much mine if every one knew," said Basil.

"I told you, dear," replied Evelyn, "that I trusted you quite, and I leave it to you to judge if you really think it best not to say anything to them; you must do as you think right, darling. I never did anything by halves, and now I seem to have lost my identity, and have no will but yours."

"Evelyn, you cannot think what it is to me to feel that the dream of my life is accomplished, and that there is one blessed, pure soul like yours caring for me. It has been my one hope, sweet heart," and he pressed her passionately to his breast; "and now, with this brief bit of joy, am I to part with you so soon?"

"O Basil, when shall we meet again?" she said, and the tears came into her eyes at the thought of parting.

"Soon, dearest; but I have my grandfather to talk over first. You know his absurd ideas about me, and his ambition. I must make it all smooth for you, my little one."

"But about writing, Basil; how can I be supposed to hear from you? Oh! do tell Lady Frankland," said the girl.

"Nay, my darling," said Basil, as he pressed his lips to her smooth, white forehead; "don't ask me. You can't imagine how annoyed she would be on my grandfather's account; and you must stay here some time longer till they go south."

"May I tell my late guardian, and the old people I live with?"

"Tell no one, dear; trust me," said Basil.

"But how am I to hear from you? O Basil, do let me hear somehow."

"Yes, you shall, my own; but you, how *am* I to hear from you?"

"Why, Basil dear, I can write every day. I almost always take my letters to the post, by way of a walk."

"My treasure, you must not stay now; it only wants ten minutes to dinner-time. *Ahimé*, and I must go to-morrow; it's misery to think of. Look here; you will

talk to me after dinner, won't you? We have all been in the garden for several evenings past, and we may perhaps get a walk. You will not fret when I am gone, dear? promise me that."

"No, indeed I won't; but you, you will never feel sad and lonely again, as you have so often said you did; and remember, darling, that now if I was not to see you for years, I should never change, never forget you. I love once, and for ever. I know that so thoroughly. And now I mean to try and improve in all ways, so as to be more worthy of you," replied Evelyn.

"Hush, Evelyn, my darling; never say that again. It is I that am not, never can be, worthy of you, when I think of your pure, good life, and mine."

"I don't care about your past life, or anything, except that you are mine now. I don't think you ever cared for any one as you do for me, till now. Ah me! how different life does seem now to what it did when I came into this room! and now I must go."

"Let me look into your blessed eyes once more," he murmured, as his lips rested on her eyelids; "no one ever had such eyes as yours, my darling, I do think."

She tore herself at last from his grasp, and flew to

her room, wrote two lines in pencil to Susan, despatched the note, and dressed with a feeling of intense happiness in her heart as she had never thought to know.

When she re-appeared in the drawing-room, it was almost a feeling of relief to her to see that Basil was not there, and she sank into a chair in a dark corner to think a little; but she was not long left in peace, for the General came up, full of inquiries as to whether she was tired. Even he could not but see the bright, happy flush on her face.

Dinner was announced, and Basil and she sat side by side. In so small a party, it was difficult to say anything that was private; still he contrived to say, in the middle of an animated discussion between the General and Lady Frankland about Lady Charlotte's age, "Give me a bit of hair, dear, to wear always," and Evelyn nodded consent; adding, "But give me something of yours."

"I have so little; but take anything you like. Sometimes I feel," said Basil, "that I cannot go away to-morrow."

"O yes, you must go; I won't begin by making you shirk your duties. I shall know you are thinking about me, and that will be a little comfort," said Evelyn sadly.

"Indeed I shall ; and now, talk to Charlie a little."

"It is very hard to talk or think of anything else, Basil ; but I am very obedient, and will try."

They had not much more conversation together till much later in the evening. The party were sitting talking together in the garden, when Lady Frankland said to Charlie, who was near her, that she was cold, and took his arm, adding, "Come along, Charlie, I want you to see the moonlight on the loch from the highest garden seat," and those two walked away.

A few minutes later Sir Gilbert and the General voted it very damp, and went in to begin their nightly battle at piquet.

When they were out of hearing, Basil said, "Come, darling, we will follow Augusta and Charlie. I can't tell you how it grieves me that there should be any necessity for the concealment of our love for each other ; but I have often told you how I depend on my grandfather, and how little I have of my own. I am almost a pauper, do you know, little woman ?"

Evelyn laughed outright. "Don't talk to me about money, Basil, I want so little, and I care so little about it ; I should be as happy as a queen with you anywhere.

I would sweep a crossing, dear, if you swept the opposite one, with pleasure."

His arm was round her in a moment. "Oh! my own heart, what have I ever done to deserve this happiness? If I could tell you how my dream, ever since I left Oxford, has been to have a wife and a home of my own. But we shall have to wait a bit before it is quite perfect."

In such loving way they talked, as millions have talked before, seeing life from that brightest point of view, trusting and loving each other entirely, and scarcely realizing that there were any other beings in the world but themselves. Evelyn drew from her finger a gold ring, with seven turquoises placed in it at intervals; she put it on Basil's finger, saying, "*Un peu, beaucoup, passionnément, pas du tout, un peu, beaucoup, passionnément.*" There, you see it comes quite right. Now give me that plain ring you always wear, and I'll wear it under mine."

"You *exigante* little woman," he laughed, as she turned and twisted the ring quickly to get it off his hand. "And now you've got it, it's miles too large for your little bits of fingers."

"Never mind, I'll bind some silk round it, and wear it underneath," laughed Evelyn; "and don't call me

names. You will never change, Basil? It would kill me to lose your love."

"My blessing, it's cruel to doubt me. There are Augusta and Charlie. God bless you for ever, and make me fit to be your husband," and for a moment he held her close in his arms. "Oh, Evelyn, forgive me, that I should ever bring tears in those eyes."

By this time Lady Frankland was close to them; and to hide Evelyn's confusion, Basil said to his sister, "I persuaded Miss Moncrieff to follow your example, and to come with me to say goodbye to this lovely spot. Now I am going to walk back with you, as I want to ask you several things about Edith."

Evelyn was left to walk back with Charlie. Perhaps he did not think that evening that she was quite as lively, and as much interested in his conversation, as was her wont. Still he talked on, and mentioning his prospect of a day's deer-stalking, led the conversation to Achmelvich Castle and its young mistress, to which Evelyn listened patiently.

It was bed-time when they reached the house again, and as they were saying goodbye to each other, Lady Frankland, who probably thought all danger about Basil and Evelyn was over, said to Basil, "I don't

think, dear, that I shall be down in time to see you off; I don't like disturbing baby early. I daresay Evelyn will be dressed, and will make your breakfast. I am so sorry to lose you."

Evelyn murmured something about "with pleasure," and the party separated for the night.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A LOVE LETTER.

“Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say ‘Good-night’ till it be morrow.”

SHAKESPEARE.

IT was nearly one o'clock in the morning when Charlie Hay left Basil St. John's room, after much conversation, in which, somehow, neither of the young girls' names were introduced. When he was gone, Basil took out his desk, and sat down to write a letter, which he meant to give Evelyn next morning. But before he began, as he sat there, he soliloquized a good deal, according to his habit, and reflected long on the step he had that day taken; he felt he had somehow been surprised into doing the very thing that he had always determined he would never do.

He had not a doubt but that madly and intensely he loved the girl whose heart was so entirely his; and he longed for the courage to face his grandfather and the opinion of his family, and throw precautions to the winds.

At first he sat there thinking of his past life, and

wishing that he could feel his life had been as pure and sinless as hers. Basil had never been what is considered by men a hard liver; and indeed his life had been better than most of those he had lived with. Stainless it was not—whose is?—but in this first moment of pure happiness, so quiet and peaceful, thoughts of other cups of pleasure, which had been quaffed to the dregs, now returned to him with bitter recollections. Then he thought of her sweet unselfishness; and formed a resolution to tell Sir Gilbert all before he left; but it would not do, he had not the courage. He must wait, and win over Lord Pendarves first. Again he breathed a silent prayer for a blessing on Evelyn's head, and took up his pen and began—

“MY OWN DARLING,—I must leave a few words with you. I feel as if I could not go to bed, but must sit up and think of my newly-found happiness. How I long openly to call you mine, you cannot guess. That I should have won the affection of one like yourself, Evelyn, is my wonder; and the more I think of it the more thankful I am. If you knew how often I longed to speak to you, and never could bring myself to do so, feeling what a drag it would be on your young life. Also, my grandfather's ideas about money had been so dinned into me that I was afraid. I think if it had not been for this afternoon's fishing I never should have

spoken to you ; but as you stood by me and tried to cheer me, I could bear it no longer, and all my resolutions went to the wind. My treasure, if I lived to be a thousand, I should never forget the blessed feeling of your head against my shoulder. I wonder why this trial of having to go and see my poor old grandfather is sent to me—just now, when I might be so very happy with you. I hope and pray that it may be but a short separation ; and you will bear it patiently and trust me, won't you ? I have never concealed from you, darling, how entirely my grandfather's mind has been set on my marrying a girl with money, so as to enable me to redeem some property he is very fond of. Even his last letter to me, ill as he was, alluded to it ; and in others he has begged me to marry Susan Mackenzie. Evelyn, dear, I'm so glad you are like what you are, and not like her ; though she is a very nice good creature, still not in the least my sort.

“I like to shut my eyes and think of your soft brown hair, and the depth of blue in those soul-stirring eyes of yours. What shall I do without you, you have become so entirely necessary to my life ? You are the first woman friend I ever had. My sisters, as you know, are not clever ; fond as I am of them, I cannot but see that ; but I won't make you vain, my treasure, by telling you what I think of you. Look

here, dear, I shall write to you, and you must make some excuse to Augusta. It is only for a short time. I will not ask you to condescend to long concealment. Will you write to the Club? Keep on being the busy, active little woman you are; it will help you, and make the time go more quickly. Keep up your music; you do not know how your songs melt my whole soul. I never heard any singing that I like as I do yours; you put reality in all you do. I go rambling on as if I was talking to you, and feeling that I never can make you understand all that you are to me, and the intense gratitude I have to you for your love. You are the only girl I ever really loved; for though I may have had a flirtation or two, I never really cared a straw for any one. When I think of you as my wife—my own dear wife—I wonder I can ever deserve such happiness, and if it will really ever come!

“Now, darling, I must stop; the light is coming in at the windows. This place has indeed brought me happiness. Don’t fash about me when I am gone. I don’t think you will. With what different feelings I shall start from what I expected! Now goodbye. Heaven bless and keep you, my dearest, and make me worthy of you. Shall I get one kiss to-morrow? Goodbye, and God bless you.”

CHAPTER XXV.

PARTINGS.

“ Je t'aimerai toujours, aime moi longtemps.”

“ La femme qu'on aime est le pays le plus éloigné, elle vous isole de tous vos amis, comme de toutes vos habitudes.”

La Vie à Vingt Ans.

LONG before the hour appointed for Basil's early breakfast, to the infinite astonishment of the housemaid he came into the drawing-room, and while in a frightened way she was gathering up dusters and brooms, she was yet more surprised to see Evelyn Moncrieff come in also.

The words, “ How good of you, Miss Moncrieff, to get up so early,” were for the vanishing abigail; and those “ My own, I knew you would come down early,” were more of a piece with the talk that followed, which they were able to enjoy for an hour. Much they both spoke of the future. How bright it seemed to them when they were together, and could forget the parting before them!

As for Evelyn, her disposition now showed itself to

the greatest advantage. She gave herself, heart and soul, to Basil, simply and trustingly; he was all the world to her now, and all other interests and friendships were diminished to a vanishing point. What he willed she accepted as right, for she gave neither love nor trust by halves. They talked of his earlier days, and he told her much about his family, sure of her interest and sympathy. He told her how he had been left early in life an orphan; how Lady Frankland had helped him in his youth, and how, when she had married, it had wellnigh broken his heart; then of his grandfather's whims and fancies. They discussed the future, and if a thought of the grandfather crossed Basil's mind, a glance into Evelyn's eyes chased it away directly. When the bell rang for breakfast Basil once again held Evelyn fast clasped in his arms. "God keep you, my darling, for ever."

"Basil, dearest, never think I cannot wait patiently any time," she answered, "only till I die, ay, and after that, I hope, I must love you for ever."

A few minutes after, and she was quietly making the breakfast, and if she did forget who had sugar, and who had not, and answered the queries rather absently, no one noticed it. She put up some luncheon for Basil with rather a trembling hand; and was it a tear which

was on the parcel of sandwiches ? I am afraid so. Basil's adieux were very short. Sir Gilbert was to drive him about twenty miles on his way, to look at some outlying grouse moors.

Basil wrung Charlie's hand, and then, as he took Evelyn's in his for a moment, said, " I shall think of you in all our old haunts when I am shut up in Berkeley Square. If ever a man sacrificed inclination to duty, I am doing so now. I'll send you the names of the music I promised you, and if I can do any commissions for you, you will let me know. Goodbye. Ah, what melancholy work this is !"

He did not trust himself to say more.

Five minutes later, and the carriage had disappeared from sight, and then, and then only, did it dawn on Evelyn how the sun had gone out of her life.

However, she would not stay to think of what was sad ; hers was a very buoyant nature. She went back to her room, and prayed long and earnestly that she might be a good and fit wife for Basil, when the time came that he could claim her, and that she might help him to fill his place in the world, never be a drag or hindrance to him in any way, but that together they might work good in their generation.

Later in the morning, when she met Lady Frankland

at a second breakfast, she was able cheerfully to answer her questions about Basil's departure, and even laugh when her Ladyship remarked, "Poor, dear Basil, I'm sure he was very sorry to go; I really think he was getting quite fond of Susan; I'm sure he would make her an excellent husband, and it would be a most suitable marriage, and please my grandfather of all things. However, they are sure to meet next season in London. Susan always takes a house. When did you tell her, dear, that we would go over to Achmelvich?"

Evelyn blushed a little as she remembered the circumstances under which the note had been written, and had much difficulty in remembering what hour she had named. At last she did so, and told Lady Frankland, who turned to Charlie, and said, "You must come too, you and Basil were both asked; she wants us to go up the glen, where you can see from Applecross to Handa Island."

"Fair cousin, I am at your orders," said Charlie.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A DETERMINED FOREFATHER.

“ We wither from our youth, we gasp away—
Sick, sick—unfound the boon—unslaked the thirst,
Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first—
But all too late,—so are we doubly curst.”

Childe Harold, Canto iv.

THE August sun was sinking behind the houses and the hot, dusty streets, almost abandoned to those who never migrate from London, even at that hot period of the year. Little else was to be heard but the occasional roll of a distant cab, or the bawling of costermongers, as they offered cheap fruit and vegetables to the millions that remained. London was in its yearly state of torpor, when the water-carts creep idly about the now empty streets, and when, if you do meet a friend by any chance, your only feeling is one of astonishment that any one besides yourself is unfortunate enough to be condemned to see out the dregs of the season; when, as you perambulate the empty streets, visions of cricket

matches, archery meetings, yeomanry reviews, and similar country entertainments, cross your mind. Something of this was in Basil St. John's mind as he sat alone in his grandfather's dining-room in Berkeley Square, three days after we parted with him in Scotland. The remains of his solitary meal were before him, and he was sitting with his head resting on his hand, thinking and dreaming of Glen Cannisp, and wondering what its inmates were doing.

A sealed letter, directed to Evelyn Moncrieff, lay by him—a very long letter, though it had only one stamp on it, written on the lightest and thinnest of Indian paper. He had been writing the greater part of the day, as his grandfather was in a state of stupor, from which there was no rousing him; and it was little use his remaining in the sick-room. He felt very low, and at this moment was reflecting that some of his letter breathed rather of this frame of mind; but it must go, for she would expect it. "My own," he said to himself, "if I only could go with this letter, just to get one look at your dear face. Heigho!" he said, "how I always have chaffed people that were in love; and now I am worse than any of them." "Price," he said, as the door opened, "if Lord Pendarves is still quiet and asleep, I think I will walk down to my Club for an hour."

"Very well, sir; his Lordship seems very quiet now, and the doctor did not wish you to see him to-night, even if he did rouse himself from this state of sleep; but oh, Mr. St. John, he has worried himself awful to see you till this drowsiness came on. I'm afraid, sir, it's not a good sign."

"Hardly, I fear; but while there is life there is hope."

"Yes, sir, so there is. Well, I'm sure that a better and kinder master never lived, even if he is a little cold and stiff with us servants at times. O sir, you'll excuse me, but if you could have heard as how he kep' on, as he did wish you had got married; which he knew of a very nice young lady. Forgive the liberty, sir; but having knowed you from an infant, as I may say, I feel an interest in the family; and Lord Luxborough was here, sir, not long before Milord was taken ill, and was a-talking of you," said the confidential butler.

"Was he?" answered Basil; "but I can't stay now, Price. Just get me my hat." Basil put his letter in his pocket and walked out of the house.

Quite as lonely was Berkeley Square now as on that June morning when here Charles Hay first made our acquaintance. He smiled as he recalled their conversation, and thought that he had certainly done the last

thing he had meant to do in Scotland. Then came the reflection that he preferred his own little Evelyn to any heiress that ever was born. Every hour that he was parted from his love he realized more and more how he cared for her. He posted his letter; then looked at the paper, read Argus' letter of prediction for the coming St. Leger, but found that instead of thinking of the respective merits of the favourites, his mind had flown to the far North; so he threw down the paper, and was lighting a cigar on the steps of the Club, when he almost ran against Lord Luxborough, who greeted him with equal pleasure and astonishment, and with the cordiality that people always display to each other when London is perfectly empty, and they are delighted to find any human being to speak to.

Lord Luxborough shook Basil's hand for several minutes, and then said, "My dear fellow, I suppose your grandfather's illness has brought you south. I am in town on lawyer's business, which curtailed my visits in Perthshire. Milady and Hortense are down in the country. I was uncommonly sorry to hear how ill Pendarves had been; but I hope you are satisfied about him now?"

"I've not seen him yet," answered Basil; "but I hope to be allowed to do so to-morrow morning. He

has been, and is, I fear, dangerously ill,—internal gout, —and till to-day has suffered agonies.”

“Indeed, indeed; my poor old friend! I’ll call to-morrow to hear how he is. And now, good-night! How did you leave them all in the North? and how is my fair friend, Miss Moncrieff? What a nice girl that is! Pity she has not a little of Susan Mackenzie’s money.” And so saying, Lord Luxborough went on his way.

“Pity indeed,” thought Basil, as he walked home. “But my Evelyn is worth a kingdom; if I only can get my grandfather to think so.”

The following day, when the doctor had seen his patient, he was waylaid on his return from the sick-room by Basil, to hear the bulletin of Lord Pendarves’ health.

The man’s face was grave enough as he answered Basil’s anxious query, “Not much change, my dear sir; but he is roused, and wishes very much to see you at once; and though I dread any excitement, still it is better than contradicting him. His life hangs on a thread, and I cannot even say there is hope; but he is alive, wonderful to say. Only, beware of causing him any excitement, or crossing his will in the merest trifle. I’m in a tremendous hurry—sent for to Eccleston Square. Why will people live such miles off? Good morning! I’ll look in at about four.”

In spite of his newly-found happiness, Basil looked very sad at this moment as he ascended the splendid marble staircase. He was very sincerely attached to the old man who was lying ill above, probably on his deathbed. He was recalling all the many kindnesses received from him from his infancy until now. He found the room nearly dark as he entered, every blind and shutter was closed over the open windows, to try and diminish the heat of the midday sun.

But gently as he had entered, Lord Pendarves heard the step, and his face brightened the instant he caught sight of the boy he loved better than anything on earth, --except himself.

He was a grand type of an old man; *grand seigneur* to the back-bone. When standing up he was upwards of six feet three, with an aquiline nose, a large, handsome, and well-shaped mouth, a firm, square chin, and eyes of which you could not at first distinguish the colour, so deep set, so bright they were, a deep dark-violet—the St. John eyes had been noted from the olden times. There was still plenty of soft gray hair on his head. His hands, now wasted by illness, were perfect in shape. Even the most casual observer could not but see that he had been a very handsome man in his day.

Lord Pendarves had been the pet and the idol of the most exclusive sets in London. He had been in his prime when the Reform Bill had passed. His own ideas had always been in advance of his time; and though courted alike by those in power and those out of office, he had ever distinctly declined to attach himself to any party, formed his own opinions on subjects, and openly voted to-day with the Ministry, and in their teeth the next night.

He had been very proud of his handsome young wife, but too much absorbed in politics and science to give up much time to his home. He had had a few friends, who thought him perfection, and many enemies. His will was of iron, and when once he had slowly made up his mind to a thing, nothing had ever been known to make him swerve therefrom.

Lord Pendarves' one great wish in life had been for the recovery of a certain portion of the property, which had been for near seven hundred years in the family, and which was very heavily mortgaged, and must be lost to the family, as the mortgagee threatened to foreclose. This property was by some odd chance not entailed; and it was the scheme of the old man that Basil, by a brilliant marriage with an heiress, should with her money redeem the mortgage, and then he would leave

Basil the estate, and let him live on the property after his marriage.

"My dear boy," he said, stretching out his hand, "so you have come in time to see the old man once more."

"Don't say that, dear grandfather; please God you may yet live many years to be a comfort to us all;" and Basil, as he said this, almost forgot how ill Lord Pendarves was, for the illness, though a severe one, had not as yet much reduced the fine figure, or sharpened the line of features he loved so well.

"Sit down a bit, my boy," said the old peer. "I was grieved to bring you away from your favourite amusement."

"Never mind, it was the cause which was sad to me, not the coming away; but you are feeling better, grandfather, are you not?"

"There's no better for me, my lad, in this world, I expect. I feel as if I should not baulk the old enemy this time. Well, well, don't fret about an old man; you have ever been a good boy to me. I've seen Parker about my will, and he is to bring the draft to-morrow. I should have liked to live to see the property cleared, but it's of no use thinking about it; you are safe to do it some day, for you will promise me never to marry any one but a woman with money enough for that;"

and Lord Pendarves raised himself on his elbow and looked eagerly into Basil's eyes.

The latter turned a little from the small quantity of light there was in the room, as he answered, "I'm so sorry, grandfather, that you think so much of that land; it's hardly worth redeeming when the time comes."

"Not worth redeeming!" echoed Lord Pendarves, "when it has belonged to the St. Johns from the beginning of time; it's my one hope."

Basil sighed, and said, "But my uncle's family ought to do that, if any one did; I'm the son of the younger son, and it ought not to devolve on me."

"Basil, lad, you know well enough that he is already married, and that there is no hope there. Why, here you have been all this time living close to a girl who might almost pay those debts out of her income, and do you mean to tell me that you have not made good use of your opportunities to win the lady?"

"Miss Mackenzie never gave me the slightest reason to think she cared about me one pin. But, my dear grandfather, pray do not talk, it is so bad for you," said Basil anxiously, remembering at last the doctor's injunction.

"Nonsense, lad; I shall speak as long as I can. I daresay the young lady did not make up to you. You

may think yourself a deuced good-looking fellow, but for all that heiresses with £9000 a year are not likely to jump down your throat, irresistible as you may think yourself, Mr. Basil St. John," answered his grandfather.

Basil felt thoroughly miserable at this moment, and his comfort was not increased by seeing Lord Pendarves fall back quite exhausted on his pillow. Presently the old man added, "Well, my boy, I've tried to do the best I could by you; but you may be sure that if you did not marry as I liked, I should that moment cut you off with a shilling, and stop your allowance, and then you would remain with £600 a year to carry out all your fine notions with."

Basil bit his lip till the blood nearly came, and then said, "My dear grandfather, you must please yourself about what money you choose to give me. I must, however, be free to choose my own wife; pray, do not trouble yourself about it now, it is so very bad for you. Let me read to you now." Lord Pendarves, who was dead-tired with the exertion of talking, nodded assent, and Basil took up the *Times* and read aloud for nearly an hour. If he had been asked afterwards what he had been reading, he would have been much puzzled to know if it was money markets, police reports, or leading articles he had waded through. His thoughts,

though outwardly he was calm, were very sad. He saw so plainly that, far from having altered, illness had only strengthened Lord Pendarves' wishes for him, and his notions about money seemed firmer than ever. Basil knew well that the allowance of £600 he received yearly from his grandfather, and the savings left to him as the will now stood, would all be swept away the moment he heard of his engagement to Evelyn, and that he should be left merely with the life-income of £600 a year that he had, for Evelyn's little money was nothing one way or the other.

Could he ask her to share this miserable fortune? and then he coloured as he remembered her unselfishness, and felt that *she* would not care whether he was rich or poor, and that it was himself who minded; for though Basil had few expensive tastes, and was not what is called an extravagant man, he liked all the comforts and luxuries of life, and had not the moral courage to face poverty.

All this passed through Basil's mind as he was labouring through the account of the preparations for the Fête Napoléon at Paris. When he had finished, he looked up and saw Lord Pendarves was asleep.

He was very sorry when he saw how wan and old his grandfather's face looked, and for half a moment he

repented ever having gone up to Scotland, so as to get himself into this trouble. However, the thought was but a passing one, and in an instant he felt very thankful that he had found some one to love him, and some one to love.

He sat there quietly for a long time, while Lord Pendarves slept, meditating upon how he could best break the fact of his engagement to his grandfather: at one moment determining to speak at once, and openly, telling Lord Pendarves that it was his only chance for happiness; and the next to wait for the present, and see what turned up. Then what was to be done if the old man died, and Basil was hampered by the will? He sighed, and wished Evelyn had Susan's money; and a bitter expression was on his face when he thought how each and every member of the family would be at the feet of any girl who had a large fortune, utterly regardless of whether he had any chance of being happy with her. At last, wearied with his thoughts, Basil got up and left the room.

It was worse out of the sick-chamber than in it: a large empty house, with no one in it; nothing to cheer any one in the great forlorn rooms, with the furniture all packed in washed-out brown holland; and with a gleam of sun coming through the chinks in the shutters,

making a misty, ghost-like light; and every book put away, as Basil found when in despair he wandered into the drawing-room to try and find something to read. It was hopeless, so he proceeded to wander about the deserted house, wondering whether the next day's post would bring him a letter from Evelyn.

Presently the monotony of the day was relieved by the doctor's return, who, after half an hour spent in Lord Pendarves' room, pronounced there was a turn in his favour. It was too soon, he said, to speak with a degree of certainty; but in one or two ways the worst symptoms had abated a little.

Lord Pendarves watched the way in which Basil's whole countenance brightened up when the doctor gave this verdict, and said gently, "Why, my lad, it is worth something to feel that one is as much cared for as that tell-tale face of yours revealed just now. Most of you young fellows think an old fellow like me decidedly *de trop* in the world."

"Hush, my dear Lord, don't say such things," said Basil. "Your medico has made you talk a great deal too much, I think, and you said Parker was coming, so keep quiet now."

"So he is; I forgot all about it," said the old man. "Holloa! talk of the devil—. However, that's too

personal to be pleasant, when lawyers are concerned," he said, as the butler came in and said, "Mr. Parker is below, my Lord; shall I show him up?"

"Now I will leave you, grandfather," said Basil, "to settle your affairs."

"I wish you were married, and had a son, upon whom I could entail all that I have power to leave away," sighed Lord Pendarves as Basil left the room.

"Dear me," said Basil to himself, "why can't they let me and my marriage alone?"

An hour later, when Basil was again summoned to the sick-room, he saw the will lying on the bed, signed and duly witnessed. The obsequious lawyer bowed to him, as lawyers bow to those in whom they see future clients; and Lord Pendarves said, "My boy, I've done the best I could by you, in justice to my eldest son; though I must say it's scant justice he deserves at my hands, never coming near me, and frittering away his life in Paris. I've left you residuary legatee; and if you marry to my satisfaction, so as to redeem that mortgage, Lattrell is yours at once to live in, if I recover; and if not, why, it's yours by inheritance. That is in my own power, and I always told my eldest son I should leave it to you. Now, goodnight, Basil; if I'm to live, I had best do as little as possible to hinder

the doctor. I had a letter from Luxborough, who says he is coming to see me. He did not know how ill I was, or he would not have thought it wise to delay. But, thank God ; yes," he said, with a sigh, "I do thank God, I am better. Yesterday I did not seem to care to live ; but to-day I do somehow, not for the world in general, but to see your wife and your home, if I can ; and now, good-night again, my boy. How like your poor father you grow !"

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOMETHING LIKE EXCITEMENT.

“The toils are pitch’d, and the stakes are set,
Ever sing merrily, merrily ;
The bows they bend and the knives they whet ;
Hunters live so cheerily.

“It was a stag—a stag of ten,
Bearing his branches sturdily ;
He came stately down the glen ;
Ever sing hardily, hardily.”

SCOTT.

It was about eight in the morning, in the beginning of the second week in August, that Charlie was standing at the door of the lodge in Glen Cannisp, in a fever of excitement and expectation, examining the locks of his rifle. His breakfast had been untouched, and nothing but Evelyn’s orders had made him swallow some tea, into which she had put some brandy. He was in tearing spirits, for he had had intelligence from Duncan Munro of three fine stags seen the night before, on the beat where he was to go for his much anticipated deer-

stalking; they were coming down, as is their wont, to the little patches of corn in the lower lands. He had been practising for days at the mark on the other side the river, and at bottles floating in the sea; and now he had visions of noble stags'-heads, ten, twelve, or even fourteen tines, which might grace his lodgings in St. James' Place. Duncan was to go with him, and no better guide could he have than the clever and keen-sighted old man, who knew every inch of the ground over which he was to pass, and with whom, moreover, Charles Hay was a great favourite; so that he also would be highly gratified if Charlie succeeded in getting the best head of the season.

"Duncan, Duncan, you old reprobate, come on; we shall never start. Where's the trap?"

"Sandy's just gone round for her; maybe you'll get the things out that are to go with us, sir."

"Where the deuce is the glass? I may as well go without my rifle as without that."

"Here it is, Mr. Hay; only don't swear when I am by you," said Evelyn, laughing.

"O forgive me, pray; but you know when a fellar is in an awful state of mind—"

"A fellar is indeed in an awful state of mind, I know that," said Lady Frankland, as she looked out of

the dining-room window on to the approach, where the dog-cart had now driven up.

"Charlie, you won't be so brisk when you come back, I expect, stag or no stag. Have you got some luncheon?"

"O yes; everything. I can't wait, as we've ten miles to drive. Goodbye."

And away he drove from the door, looking the very picture of health, activity, and good temper. The road followed the edge of the loch for some little way, and as he passed the few cottages he nodded to the several people he saw standing at the doors, commented on them and their families to Duncan, from whom he always excited a shrewd remark. Presently the road narrowed, and rose for several miles, till the country became very bare, and the only signs of life were a few sheep picking up a scanty living from amongst the rocks. Soon they found themselves on a grand plateau, with a view extending far north,—the curious formations of gneiss and old red sandstone, plainly traceable by their peculiar forms; no vegetation save the short grass, with here and there a bunch of ferns, or a solitary foxglove nestling under a projecting ledge of rock. The day was very clear, and promised well for the sport. They saw many a flock of wild-duck on the

small lochs they passed, and put up golden plovers, which at any other time would have stopped Charles's course. But now the only idea in his head was the "muckle stag," which Duncan was describing to him with such emphasis. Presently they came to the shepherd's small, low, two-roomed house, and here they were to leave the cart, and walk to their ground some three miles further. Charlie jumped to the ground, and lifted out his rifle carefully. The old deer-hound, Bogie, sniffed the air, as he saw the well-known preparations for sport. The gudewife sat spinning in the doorway. In front extended a long narrow loch, with marshy land on the other side; and beyond that the ground rose abruptly, over which they were to seek the red-deer. On one side the limestone-rock was nearly perpendicular, being the spurs of the chain of mountains which runs from Ross-shire to the north-west of Sutherlandshire.

"Holloa, Master Duncan; 'that looks stiffish work,'" said Charlie, as he put down the emptied glass of milk brought him by the shepherd's wife.

"Ay, but we'll no go that side, sir. Are you ready? We must start at once. The wind has shifted a bit, and we must go more to the north of the hull."

"As you will ; I'm all right. Good morning, ma'am. If I get a stag, I'll send you a shoulder."

"You're very good, sir. It is not often we taste meat," answered the woman.

Charlie left the house, patting a curly-headed urchin as he did so, and ordering a pony to be in readiness, in case he sent to the cottage to bring home the expected stag. They climbed the hill sturdily, till the country they came to was entirely desolate, without a sign of human life ; in short, a country in which only a keen sportsman, or equally keen geologist, would be likely to find themselves. Here Charlie sat down and took the field-glass, and looked over the ground carefully. This occupied him a good ten minutes, when he shook his head, as he handed the glass to Duncan.

"You would hardly expect to find them here, Mr. Hay ; they seldom come so near the shepherd's house, save at night. You see the sheep are not off that part yet. It's only lately that the Duke has had the higher land made into a forest. No, sir, I don't see even a hind. Better to be going on, I think," and they continued on their way, stopping every now and then to examine the face of the hill, which they were ascending in the teeth of the wind. They walked on till they came nearly to the top of a corrie, in which, as they knew, ran

a little stream, causing the grass there to be fresh and sweet. Then quietly and carefully they climbed the brink of a small precipice, from whence they could see right down into the little glen,—Charlie in front and crawling slowly forwards, almost on hands and knees, till he reached the top. His hand shook as he silently took the glass from Duncan, who was lying close behind him, with his arm round the dog's neck, to keep it quiet. Charlie carefully scanned the ground, and he then slightly started at an object visible in the middle-distance—a bright, brown lump—which even his unpractised eye could tell was a red deer. But he shook his head, as he gave the glass to Duncan, saying, "It's no go. It's a hind with a calf; never mind, better luck next time. The best plan would be, I suppose, to go to the upper ground at once. Holloa! look here," he said, and pointed to the footprints in the soft earth, as he went forwards; "Here's fresh slot; look, Duncan; that's this morning's print, for it rained hard last night, you know."

Duncan's eye brightened. "Ay, indeed, Mr. Hay; it will not be more than two hours since you beast was here; and the tracks go upwards. It's a full-grown one. Ah! if we can get that beauty I saw three nights ago, it will be just splendid."

"Come on, then," said Charlie, in a state of intense excitement.

"Gently, sir," said Duncan, "it's no use being over quick now ; spare your strength," and he added some Gaelic, as was his wont when eager. On they went, carefully watching the tracks, till they came to a piece of hard, dry ground, where all impression disappeared ; a stony district which continued till they had almost reached the top of the hill. They continued steadily mounting, facing the wind. When close to the brow of the hill, they halted and held a council as to how the gully should be reached, in which Duncan made sure they would find the stag. Charles's heart beat violently, as much from excitement as from the steepness of the ascent. They agreed to keep on to the extreme summit, where was a large rock, behind which they could approach and make their observations unseen. Duncan's shrewdness and perfect acquaintance with the ground stood them now in good stead ; and in a few moments the two men stood entirely screened from view, where they might survey the scene below without breaking the sky-line ; and where the rocks seemed placed on purpose to afford a screen for those who wished to overlook the valley unobserved.

The view was one of those panoramas, which afford

such pleasure to some, while to others they are totally uninteresting from the fact of their forming no picture. At another time it would have delighted Charlie, but now he had no time to bestow a thought on it, or whereabouts he might find Achmelvich Castle, which might otherwise have engrossed him. No, he recovered his breath, and then again scanned the ground, up and down, long and anxiously ; no success at all this time, and, with a much disappointed face, he was returning the glass to its case, when Duncan touched his arm and whispered, " See, Mr. Hay, there he is, sure enough." Charlie turned and strained his eyes in the direction Duncan pointed, and there, from behind a crest of rock, had quietly walked, feeding as he slowly advanced, a magnificent stag, followed by four or five hinds. This was some half-mile from where they stood, and fortunately in the teeth of the wind. The dog had sighted them, and was eagerly gazing at them. Duncan whispered, " Ay, but he's the best head I've seen this many a year."

" But how shall we make sure of him, Duncan ? I put myself in your hands."

" Well, Mr. Hay, I do know something about it, and if you thing will shoot straight we'll no go home empty-handed. Follow me, till we get to the head of the gully, and then, I think, we will get a fine stalk by going in

at the narrow end of the glen. You see by those rocks we shall be able to keep right to the wind, and out of sight. I think you had best take a pull at your flask, Mr. Hay, that's a stiff two miles we must go round, and very rough ground every inch of it.

"All right," said Charlie, "now for it; have some yourself, man."

"I'll no say nay. Your health, sir," said Duncan, tossing off the whisky.

Down the steep side of the mountain they went, the stones rattling down in a way that, on the other side of the mountain, would soon have lost them all chance of a stag. Safely they came to the entrance of the gorge or narrow valley, completely surrounded on all sides by the precipitous rocks, and there, surely enough, at about one hundred yards from them, grazed the herd. They halted, and lay down on the grass, without a syllable spoken. Charlie crawled a few yards forward on his hands and knees till he arrived where he could, unseen, take a good aim. He levelled his rifle, steadily, he thought, but the walk had made his hand shake, and he let it fall again to give himself a few moments' rest. Suddenly aware, probably by some instinct, that mischief was at hand, the stag lifted his head, and sniffed the air anxiously. Charlie's rifle was again raised in

an instant, but the stag, by his slight movement, had placed himself behind the hinds. Charlie waited again an instant, when the whole herd took fright at something, and set off at a trotting pace. The stag was now first, and in an instant the cracking ball behind its shoulder told that the Lancaster had done its work well.

The hinds had disappeared far over the hill-side before Charlie had come up with the animal, which, after one bound high in the air when the shot struck it, had fallen dead instantly. A noble beast it was, in the fullest condition—a royal head.

"Well done, well done, sir," said Duncan; "this is the best head I've seen for many a day; it will beat all that have been shot here this year. It's a right beauty," he said, lifting the head up.

"One feels almost ashamed to have killed such a creature for one's amusement," said Charlie.

Duncan stared at him, and then said, "Well, sir, maybe I have thought that myself, but I never thought to hear one of you gentlemen say it."

"It's true for all that; but we must not stay talking here." Turning round to Duncan he said, "How are we to get this home?"

"I think, sir, I had best step back with you to the shepherd's, and come up here with the lad and the

pony. I doubt their finding the place, unless I show it to them."

"Step back, Duncan! why, that's too much even for your strength, I think," said Charlie, laughing; "no, we can mark the place."

"Nay, nay, sir, just allow me to come."

"As you will. Mind, you give the gudewife a shoulder. We've made a good day's work, I think."

"Ay, indeed, I'm thinking your friend Macintosh will no be sae ready to give you another day," replied Duncan, with a grin.

At the shepherd's house, Charlie and Duncan Munro parted company, and the former proceeded to eat his luncheon on a convenient rock he found on his path.

From where he sat he could just see in the far distance the little boat belonging to Achmelvich Castle. He took out his glasses, and tried to make out who was in it. He thought he could distinguish Susan's light graceful figure; but it was imagination, he said to himself, as he put down the glasses with a sigh, and proceeded to walk slowly homewards. Then he began a long meditation upon this girl, wishing she had been any pauper in the clan, and not encumbered, as he thought it, with all that wealth. He himself had but little, but

he was so unselfish and so simple in all his tastes, that he felt he could conscientiously ask any girl who, he thought, liked him well enough, and whom he really loved, to risk her happiness in his care. He felt that he should rise in the world, if he had some object in view ; and believed that, with his two hands and head, he might then arrive at some eminence, for, behind all his careless, easy manner, lay a clear and thinking brain. Never till he had met Susan Mackenzie had the question of marrying put itself to him. He had never been in love for more than a week, and whenever he had looked forward to a home in the future, it had been more for his mother and sisters than for a wife, that he had thought of it. But now his longing was to be great and distinguished, and to place all at Susan's feet. If he could once think that she cared for him, heiress or no heiress, he would ask her to marry him. His difficulty was there. Nothing in her manner to him could in the least help him. Her ways were perfectly natural and frank, but then so they were with every one else. He felt he had but little time to ascertain her feelings, for he must go south without delay. A letter from the head of his office warned him his time was up, and from that summons there was no appeal.

The excitement of the day and the long walk were beginning to tell ; even Charlie could not at this moment take a very cheerful view of life, and of the prospect of going back to London office work all through a long winter. He turned again to Susan in his mind, and wondered how he could see her before he left. He had thoughts of opening his mind to Evelyn, with whom he was now on very intimate terms ; but he had a great dread of saying anything of his inmost hopes and wishes, if indeed they could be called hopes, unless he saw some chance of their being realized.

He walked on slowly over many a mile, pondering what was best for him to do, and recalling every look and word of Susan's to him, at one moment inclined to think, from something she had done for him, that he had a chance, and the next recalling that the same thing had been done for Basil or the General. He wondered whether he should see anything of her in London ; that was the next point. He had heard Lady Charlotte say they would be in London in November or December.

But here his reflections were stopped by seeing Lady Frankland, Lady Charlotte, Susan, and Evelyn, all walking along the road to meet him.

"Well, Charlie," said Lady Frankland, as soon as

they were within earshot; "no success, I am afraid, by your very dejected appearance?"

"You are wrong for once, fair cousin. I suppose I was meditating over the untimely death of my victim," replied Charlie.

"You don't mean to say you have got a stag?" exclaimed Susan. "Well, I am glad; you were so anxious to get one, I know."

"Yes, Miss Mackenzie, and a real beauty. You shall see the head. I shall send it to M'Leay to set up for me, for I was told I might keep any head I got."

"We are all astonishment and pleasure," joined in Evelyn. "Susan has been saying how seldom people get anything when Mr. Macintosh gives them a day."

"I think you are all very kind to take so much interest in my success," said Charlie.

"Ah! you deserved it," replied Susan. "You took the trouble to stalk properly, and did not have the deer driven for you."

They talked cheerfully as they all walked home together, but somehow to Susan, Charlie did not announce his approaching departure. He asked a little about their plans, and hoped they would meet somewhere in the winter; and, to his surprise and pleasure,

Susan said, "Yes, indeed, I hope so. This has been, thanks to you all, by far the pleasantest autumn I have had since my poor mother died, when I was a small child. Here we must part," she said. "Aunt Charlotte, I ordered the pony-carriage to meet us at that cottage," and, except a few words to Lady Charlotte, this was all that passed between them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HE WOULD AND SHE WOULDN'T.

"My dear, it's a very serious thing to be married."

"Much more serious thing not to be."

Punch.

"You're weel enough for them that likes ye, but you're
ower weel for them that likes ye and canna get ye."

Scotch Proverb.

"My dear child, do be serious and listen to me," said Lady Charlotte Mackenzie to Susan, who was standing by her chair with an open letter in her hand, in fits of laughter. "My dear, ridiculous as you may think it, the man must have an answer one way or another, and it is only two hours to post time, and you have four letters to write and two notes, besides the orders to the keepers.

"But, Aunt Charlotte, do listen," said Susan. "Did you ever hear such bombastic impudence?" and she read aloud: "'And from the partiality which I could not fail to observe you condescended to evince for myself, my pursuits and tastes, I am inclined to think

that the offer of my hand and heart cannot fail to be acceptable, and my excellent father'—I am sure he wrote a rough copy of the letter—'will be able to manage your estates and property, which must necessarily, from being under female management, be in a manner involved.' Impertinent puppy, that's what comes from tolerating one's bores of relations out of kindness. Aunt Charlotte, men are getting too conceited and intolerable; it's beyond a joke," and Susan walked up and down the room in a highly excited frame of mind, till her gown caught in the castor of Lady Charlotte's arm-chair, and several yards of the trimming tore off. She stopped short, and Lady Charlotte exclaimed, "Oh, Susan, really—that pretty gown. What a pity! quite spoilt, and I know the trimming was 3s. 6d. a yard; and it can't be matched. Dear, dear, what a pity that young man sent his proposal the very day you had that new gown on!"

"Poor Kenneth Grant! well, he is not responsible for that," laughed Susan. "I don't believe myself that he has the faintest wish to marry me, but that his father has badgered him into sending this—and now I must answer him. Aunt Charlotte, will you do it?"

"O no, indeed, my dear," said her Ladyship, with an accent of great alarm. "I never shall forget what I

underwent when I refused poor Captain Carew at that fancy ball at Southampton, before I married, you know, my dear, and I was dressed as a Turkish sultana, and he was in such a splendid uniform. They all said he was drunk, but I never believed it, though he did ask me to give him my shoes as a keepsake. Such a good-looking young man too; came of a sad wild lot, and hadn't a penny, which, of course, could not be his fault."

While she had been running on like this, Susan had begun her letter:—

"DEAR MR. GRANT,—I think you must have laboured under a strange delusion in thinking that my affairs were so entangled as to require your father's kind assistance to arrange them. Pray accept my best thanks for the honour of the proposal you have made me, which I must decline, having no intention at present of changing my state of life.—Believe me to remain, yours truly,

" S. MACKENZIE."

"Will that do, Aunt Charlotte? I believe the man is a fool, but I don't want to be too hard on him."

"I suppose it will, but it's a great pity you go on saying 'No' like this," said Lady Charlotte.

"But you would not wish me to say 'Yes' this time?" replied Susan.

"No, my dear, no, perhaps not to him; but you see you must marry somebody soon. You know I'm getting quite an old woman, and you would not like to be left alone in the world; it's so disagreeable when you are old, let alone being young, and having unmarried lawyers to talk to, and being good-looking, and the rents not paid, and the dividends not coming in, and your money being in things that don't pay. O Susan, if you would have thought of Mr. St. John or Mr. Hay."

Susan coloured and said, "But you see, you dear, best of aunts, neither of those two young gentlemen seems to have thought of me; and as it's a game that a man ought to begin, I must bide my time, Aunt Charlotte. Please God, you will be spared many years to me," and she stooped and kissed her, "and then whenever I am left alone in the world, why, maybe I shall find some work to do, and some one to be useful to. But I will marry, auntie dear, if any one I like and thoroughly respect asks me," and she gathered up her letters.

Suddenly Lady Charlotte said, "I wonder how Lord Pendarves is; we ought to hear soon. Mr. St. John was to write and tell me. I used to know him when he was a young man, and a very fine gentleman he was.

My poor mother used always to say that nobody had ever had such a high-bred manner; he always brought people up to his level, and never condescended to them. I really thought at one time that Basil St. John was making love to Miss Moncrieff. I observed that he hardly danced with any one else, and was always paying her attention. But I suppose he thought it would never do, with Lord Pendarves so dreadfully anxious about money, and she, poor girl, without a penny. He is a very nice creature, is that Basil St. John," added her Ladyship, "so gentle and quiet, and his faults more owing to his family than to himself. How they did all spoil him!"

"I wish with all my heart that he and Evelyn Moncrieff would marry each other," replied Susan. "She is a true, good girl; if anything, too good for him; but, O dear, what weary failing all love-making does seem! The right people don't meet, or, if they meet, something is sure to go wrong."

"Mr. Hay is going away in a few days, he told me," said Lady Charlotte. "I shall just ask him to take my gloves up to town to be cleaned, and to take those comforters to poor old Sam's."

"Going south, is he!" exclaimed Susan, "when? He never said a word about it to me, when I spoke of more fishing and shooting."

"He seemed very sorry to go, poor man, and said he should come and say goodbye, and I told him, my dear, that he had better come to luncheon; because then, you know, there's always plenty of hot meat from the servants' dinner. Dear, dear, and I quite forgot to send poor old Murdoch Lamont some broth, and he will be expecting it, so I must go and see about it. By the bye, my dear, I think we might as well ask Mr. Hay to dinner instead of luncheon, if you like it?"

"O yes, Aunt Charlotte, certainly, any day you like; but I daresay he won't come," and she sighed as her aunt left the room.

The invitation to dinner, which caused Charles Hay's heart to leap with pleasure, and made the world seem very sunny when he wrote his acceptance, was, alas for the frailty of human hopes! destined never to be realized,—for, on the morning of the day in question, came a note from Lady Charlotte to Lady Frankland, saying that a sad accident had happened to Susan, which, though not so bad as they had at first anticipated, would prevent their seeing Mr. Hay at dinner.

Charlie's heart turned sick with fear as he heard this. But as Lady Frankland read on, she saw that it was not so very bad. Susan's ponies had taken fright and run away with her, and she had been thrown out

and much bruised. Though no bones were broken, it was ordered that she should keep her bed, as her ankle and wrist were both sprained. Susan sent her "kind regards to Mr. Hay, and begged he would shoot over her ground during the remaining days he had in Scotland, and she hoped he would call on them when they were in London."

These last few words had not been meant for Charles Hay, but was a part of Susan's observations to her aunt while she was writing the note.

This was a great and bitter disappointment to Charlie. He knew that a long time must pass in uncertainty for him, even could he ever persuade himself to speak to her of his love.

He turned to the window, however, and only said, "Augusta, I am so sorry for that poor girl; is there a decent doctor about here?"

"O yes. The man who attended Gibby is particularly clever, I believe. I suppose you will shoot as she tells you, for there is really nothing worth your going out for here. Must you go on Saturday?"

"I'm afraid, indeed, that I must, dear Augusta, thank you. It is very good of you and Sir Gilbert to have kept me here so long."

"Nonsense, Charlie. You know that, next to Basil,

there is no one in the world we like more to have with us than you. Poor Basil, I'm sure he will be sorry to hear of Susan's accident," continued her Ladyship, looking towards Evelyn, whose head was bent low over young Gibby, tying his handkerchief for him.

From neither of her companions did Lady Frankland's observation elicit any answer.

Charlie accepted the invitation to shoot, and if his shooting was less good than usual, and now and then he missed an easy shot, we should not be surprised. Both days that remained to him, the bulletin of Miss Mackenzie was a good one. On the second day he saw Lady Charlotte, wished her goodbye, and asked her to give a note to her niece, thanking her for all kindness.

Lady Charlotte's manner was very kind ; and perhaps something of his state of mind dawned upon her as she said to him, "We shall often see you again, I hope, for you are not one of the sort who think of nothing but Susan's money,—who are always dangling after her."

"Goodbye! Thank you, dear Lady Charlotte, for all your kind words." And Charles Hay wrung her hand as he parted.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DOMESTIC STRIFE.

“ Shall I then come soundly to thee,
And wish thee to a shrewd, ill-favour'd wife ?
Thou 'dst thank me but a little for the counsel ;
And yet I 'd promise thee she shall be such,
And very rich. But thou art too much my friend,
And I 'll not wish thee to her.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“UPON my word, Luxborough, I do think you do things on purpose to provoke me. It's too bad. What do I want with this tiresome old man and his impertinent, airified grandson down here ?” so said Lady Luxborough to her lord, as she laid down the letter she had been reading.

“ My dear, Pendarves is my oldest friend ; and I told you I was going to ask him when I went up to town the other day. He's been so ill that the change will do him good, now that he is so much better, and able to get about ; and I could do no less than ask St. John also. I'm sure he is very quiet and gentlemanlike.”

"Oh, have it all your own way, pray," said her Ladyship, tossing her head. "You never said a word about the matter to me. Of course, I shall have to entertain him all day, as you always have Quarter-Sessions or some other ridiculous excuse for leaving me from morning till night."

"If you are so set against having him here, I suppose I must write and put him off," answered Lord Luxborough.

"Yes; and lay the blame on me. Just like you. No; I suppose the man must come. And of course he will want all manner of messes cooked for him; and we shall have Tempest giving warning. As for Mr. St. John, I can't think what anybody can see in him to like. Nobody but such a little fool as that Miss Moncrieff ever would care for him; and it was very easy to see how she tried to catch him. I'm sure I should be shocked to see my daughter lay herself out to catch young men as she did," said Lady Luxborough, drawing herself up.

"Really, Milady, I did not see anything to notice one way or the other. The girl was a nice, simple, unaffected little thing as ever I wish to see; and I am sure she was very kind to Hortense," replied Lord Luxborough.

"Kind to Hortense!" echoed his wife. "Of course

she was kind. I suppose she expected to be asked here; but she is out for once in her life. When are these people coming?"

"You have got the letter, my dear; but I think it is the 28th of September," answered the patient peer.

"Of course; just the most inconvenient day they could have chosen. I have told the under-servants they might go to the Regatta at Weymouth."

"But surely whether the housemaid and kitchen-maid go there or not, won't make much difference to Pendarves?" said Lord Luxborough.

"Just like a man. However, go they shall," said her Ladyship. "I'm not one of those people who promise poor unfortunate overworked servants holidays, and then disappoint them."

"Poor overworked masters is, I think, nearer the mark," said a merry voice in the doorway. "What is the matter, mother?"

"Only that your father, with his usual consideration, has asked Lord Pendarves and his great conceited grandson down here, Gerald; just the last thing I wanted."

"Basil St. John! Well, now I am glad; he was always the kindest friend to me when I was a small boy at school and he was a big one." So said a very tall, good-looking youth of twenty, Gerald Hinton, Lady Lux-

borough's eldest child. He was six feet two inches already in height, and had not done growing. He had now been in the Guards for two years; had a clear complexion, and brown hair and eyes; and was the favourite of all who knew him. He was also the only person who could reduce his mother to kindness and urbanity of manner.

"When are they coming, father? Poor old Pendarves, he has had a desperately bad time of it! How he will admire your garden, mother!"

Now this was indeed pouring oil on troubled waters; for if Lady Luxborough had a tender point about her, besides her love for her children, it was a great passion for her flowers. Mollified by her son's tact, she rather brightened up, and turned to the terrace, saying, "Yes, I do think it is in great beauty, Gerald."

"I never saw it better, mother; did you? Try that seaweed I recommended you for your roses, and see what happens. It's very good for fruit; and I don't see why it should not make good flowers. I'll ask to-day at the nursery-garden when I ride in for the second post letters. I must go now,—12.30; and the object of my affections promised to write twice a day to me, till I could summon up courage to propose," added the young man, laughing.

"Ah, Gerald, it's all very well to joke about such subjects; but I feel certain that next season you will be snapped up by some detestable woman or other," answered his mother.

"I wonder why mothers all talk of their sons being snapped up, but never of their daughters in those terms?" said Lord Luxborough, looking up from his *Times*. "You would not say, my dear, that some detestable man was sure to snap up Hortense next year; on the contrary, you will consider you and she were both doing only your duty in trying to find some very eligible young man for her. Oh, Milady, women damage their own cause by speaking in that kind of way."

Lady Luxborough, who was quite surprised at her lord's speech, did not answer; and Gerald Hinton replied, "As for my affections, I shall choose for myself when the time does come, mother mine. I give you due notice. When does St. John come?"

"Mr. St. John comes on the 30th, and Lord Pen-darves a day or two before."

Ampfield Court, where this conversation took place, was a very large, comfortably-built house, some 150 years old, built at a time when inside comfort was more thought of than external beauty. It was a large, square, Queen Anne house, of so unornamental an ap-

pearance, that one of Gerald Hinton's brother officers, on arriving, had told him that he thought they had brought him to the county hospital, and that he fully expected to see "Supported by Voluntary Contributions" written on the building.

The park, however, was well worth seeing, and was one of the finest in England. The timber was magnificent, and the ground undulated beautifully from one end to the other, rising towards the centre to a hill, on which the house stood, from which you could count five counties; so it was said, at least. It was a thoroughly rich English scene, and the foliage, which just now was beginning to turn, gave an additional charm to the landscape. The orchards were heavy with their golden fruit, and the slanting rays of the sun fell on the prospect, lighting up here and there a distant spire or tower; while on the horizon could be seen the smoke of a small town curling in the far-off woods.

The drive was a long one from the lodge gates to the house, and this was the view that met Basil St. John's eye a month after we parted with him in London. He was driving through the park to join his grandfather at Lord Luxborough's, and he had full leisure to admire the landscape, and the way everything was arranged and kept up. Lord Pendarves' illness had taken a

favourable turn from the moment of Basil's arrival from Scotland; and at the time we again meet him, the only remains of his dangerous illness was great weakness, which made him require constant care and attention. He had now been two days at Ampfield Court. Business had kept Basil in London; at least he had made that excuse, though the fact was that he wished to wait and receive his bi-weekly letter from Evelyn Moncrieff. He had told her in his last epistle to her that matters were in no way changed for him, but that he trusted, when his grandfather was stronger, that he would listen to him, and sanction his engagement, when he found it was the only chance he had for happiness. He had reiterated his protestations of love, and said, as he truly felt, that every hour he was away from her only taught him more and more to appreciate her, and showed him the blank there was in his life apart from her. Her letters to him in answer were like the true woman she was,—trusting him utterly and entirely, and believing that he could do no wrong, and saying his will was hers. “My darling,” said her last letter, “I am quite content to wait and bide your time. On my own account I would have tried to speak to Lord Pendarves as soon as possible, because everything that is not quite open is painful to me; but if you think it best to wait, I desire

no appeal from that decision. I deceive no one, because I have no belonging to whom I owe any account of my conduct, and am of age. I wish I could see Lord Pendarves. He would forgive us, I think, and let me try and make you happy. Your little photograph is a great treasure, but have a big one done for me, please. God bless you, dear, dear Basil. This place seems quite different now that you are gone. I suppose we shall soon go south. Goodbye."

So had ended her letter; and the more he thought, the more sure he was that her happiness lay in his hands, and that her love for him was not one that would easily pass away. He roused himself as he neared the house, and was rather relieved when he was told the ladies of the party had all gone to dress. He had only time to go to his grandfather's room for an instant, and congratulate him on his improved appearance, and then Basil rushed to his room to make the hastiest of toilets, and to find, of course, everything that he wanted to put on was in the wrong place. However, at last he was dressed, and on his arrival in the drawing-room was greeted by Lady Luxborough with a query as to whether he minded cold dinner; by Lord Luxborough with the kindest and heartiest of welcomes; and by a very tall young man, saying, as he took his

hand, "Mr. St. John, I'm right glad to see you here, and return some of your youthful good deeds by me. Ah! you don't remember me, I see. Little Gerry, to whom you used to be so good at school years ago."

"You?" answered Basil, smiling; "no, indeed, I did not. You were about a quarter your present size then."

"And about a quarter as good," answered Gerald Hinton. "I should have looked you up in London; but it so happened that when you have been in town I have always been quartered at Windsor, or at Eastbourne, for the musketry instruction, and so missed you. I did see you at Lord's two years ago, but you did not see me, and before I could get at you, you had disappeared. But here is dinner."

Lord Pendarves dined early, and the curate and his sister, Miss Hinton and a cousin, and two Eton boys, made up the party. Basil gave Lady Luxborough his arm, and sat between her and her daughter. The latter talked pleasantly enough about Scotland and their visit to the Franklands, and asked him if he had heard lately from Glen Cannisp. Basil found it rather difficult to answer her questions quietly, as the name of Glen Cannisp caught Lady Luxborough's ears. She stopped short in the lecture she was giving the curate, Mr.

Sanford, for not having discovered that proselytizing by the Roman Catholics was going on to an awful extent in an orphan family, the eldest of whom was seven years old; and then she began a violent attack on General Tremaine, and said he was a maudlin old fool, "for ever complimenting and making much of that Miss Moncrieff, who evidently liked the sort of thing."

Basil got scarlet and bit his lip, and was proceeding to answer, when, fortunately for all parties, a diversion was caused by one of the Eton boys contriving to upset a cup of raspberry cream straight into Miss Sanford's lap, which attracted all Lady Luxborough's attention, and she scolded the boy for five minutes; after which she turned to Basil, and gave him a little of what she meant kindly, *i.e.*, good advice about his trying to get something to do; but she did it in so remarkably unpleasant a way, and so roughly, that Basil settled in his mind that nothing but the fact of his grandfather requiring his services would induce him to stay under that woman's roof.

After dinner he found himself talking very pleasantly to his grandfather and Gerald Hinton, till the latter was called away to sing trios with Hortense and Miss Sanford, when Lord Pendarves asked him whether he did not think the former a very nice girl? "Would she not

do for him ; she had £60,000, an aunt's fortune, and didn't give herself any airs ? ”

Basil laughed as he answered, “ Don't you think that, when you remember that includes her mother's company, she is dear at the money ? ”

Then they talked much of Lord Pendarves' health, and of his plans. He looked not so well as Basil had at first thought. He must not speak of Evelyn just yet, he said to himself. The doctor had told him that probably any relapse would be fatal, and that he must be kept perfectly quiet. Basil sighed as he looked at Gerald Hinton, and thought that he could marry whom he chose to-morrow, with no one to say him nay ; while he “ had to wait and keep his affection dark, and all because of this rotten money.” Late at night, as Basil and Gerald sat up talking of the old school days, and their mutual adventures during later years, Gerald said suddenly, “ Do you know, St. John, that I never expected you would have been single so long ? Why don't you marry, as you complain of your lonely life ? You are cut out for a model country gentleman.”

Basil's tone was rather bitter as he answered, “ Don't you know that I am not heir to thousands a year, but dependent on my grandfather, more or less ? and he has got into his head the idea that I must ‘ marry money,’—

curse the term," he added, as he kicked over a small stool at his feet; "and, as I never came across an heiress I cared a rush about, I don't see how we are ever to square it."

"Well," laughed Gerald Hinton, looking at Basil with a much amused face, "I suppose, like the rest of us, you have seen angels that are beggars. But," he added, after a five minutes' pause, "will you do what no one ever does, take advice, and that is, if ever you come across a woman you thoroughly like, and who likes you, stick to her through thick and thin. Depend upon it, my dear fellow, young as I am, I have lived long enough to see that money gilds no matrimonial pills, that are really pills. It's all very well to say that 'it is best to repent in a coach and six;' but it's best not to repent at all. If people really care about each other, why, they can stand the absence of some luxuries."

"Yes," said Basil, "I suppose so; but then comes the everlasting question of 'large family and small means.' How can you ask a woman to give up all she has been used to, and rough it with you?"

"That's the girl's look out; if she likes you she won't think twice about that, and if she doesn't, she will not marry you." Basil half smiled as he remembered how exactly Gerald was repeating Evelyn's words.

He felt as he left the smoking-room, as if, with Hinton to back him, he could face Lord Pendarves. He sat up a little later into the night, to add a few words to the sort of journal he sent to Evelyn, and this letter was brighter and more hopeful than any he had written to her since they parted.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN EXPLOSION.

“What a single word can do !
Making life seem all untrue ;
Driving hope and joy away,
Leaving not a single ray.
Blighting every flower that grew,
What a single word can do !”

SEVERAL days passed, and except from his tone of speaking, and his anxieties towards post time, Gerald Hinton gathered little of Basil's frame of mind. The conversation about marrying had not been renewed, for their party had been enlarged by the arrival of some of Gerald's brother officers for shooting, and there had been no opportunity for a *tête-à-tête*.

Lord Pendarves daily improved in health, and Lady Luxborough, who at heart meant kindly, was pleased to nurse him, in a rough sort of way, and took pains to prevent her Etonians from troubling him with their noise, and she herself every day attended to the right food being provided for the fanciful invalid. To Basil she remained as curt as ever in manner, and snubbed

him on all occasions, for his good, as she had thoroughly persuaded herself.

That she suspected how the case lay would be saying too much, perhaps ; but she was a sharp woman, and one day caught sight of Evelyn's handwriting when the second post letters were being handed round the table at luncheon time. This surprised her, and a glance at Basil's conscious and "would-be indifferent" face as he put the letter in his pocket, revealed a good deal. However, for that time she was prudent and held her tongue, but this little circumstance had awakened suspicions which would not be easily allayed: When the party dispersed later to go and see a cricket-match, and a break and various riding horses had carried off all her guests except Lord Pendarves, she thought that having got him to herself, it would be a good opportunity to give him what she considered a friendly warning. So seeing that the old man was sitting in a bath-chair on the terrace enjoying the warmth of the afternoon sun, which seemed to put, he said, new life in his chilled blood, she took her knitting and camp-stool, and stepped out on the terrace, and went up to the invalid, saying, "As they have all departed, I shall come and sit here and have a chat with you. I may as well sit here as by myself in the drawing-room." Lord Pendarves, whose

manner was of the most courteous, bowed and said, "He had not anticipated that the cricket-match would be such an advantage to him." Little as he liked Lady Luxborough, he never forgot that she was the mother of an heiress, and that possibly Basil might be her son-in-law some day.

They talked for a little while of the beauty of the day, and the prospects of an election, and wondered whether Gerald, who would then be of age, would be induced to stand for the county. Presently Lady Luxborough said abruptly, "When do you expect the Franklands south again ?

"Next week, I think," replied Lord Pendarves. "Frankland is anxious about his horses and hounds."

"Oh, indeed," said Lady Luxborough ; "next week ; and pray what do they mean to do with that girl ?"

"What girl ?" said her guest.

"Why, that Miss Moncrieff, who contrived so completely to hook your grandson. Who else should I mean ?" answered her Ladyship.

"What do you mean, Lady Luxborough ?" said the old peer, looking utterly bewildered.

"Oh, I'm sure I didn't know it was a secret," said his hostess. "Perhaps I had better hold my tongue ; only his devotion to Miss Moncrieff was openly talked

of. I didn't like the girl a bit, but of course as I am not going to marry her, my opinion don't matter."

"What is all this about?" said Lord Pendarves impatiently. "Marrying! who is going to be married? I don't in the least understand; I never heard of any girl at Glen Cannisp except Miss Mackenzie, and my grandson did not seem to take to her, from his letters. I remember something about some penniless girl who was to go down with Augusta Frankland, but he never mentioned her name. However," added the old peer, in his usual dignified manner, "if there is anything real in the matter I have little doubt that he will acquaint me with it;" so saying, to Lady Luxborough's annoyance, Lord Pendarves returned to the conversation about the county, and then asked her what she meant to do with her two boys, apparently gave the fullest attention to her answers, and talked on for near an hour, till she left him to superintend some garden operations.

Presently he was joined by Basil, who had returned earlier than the rest of the party, and who came to see how his grandfather was, and if he wanted anything. He told him of the cricket match, talked for a few moments, and was moving off, when the old man said, "Wait a little, Basil, my boy, I want to speak to you.

I want you to tell me whether there is any truth in a report which has reached my ears, that you have been trifling with the affections of a Miss Moncrieff, now staying with your eldest sister. I did not believe it, as I believe you to be too honourable for such behaviour."

"No, grandfather," said Basil, suddenly turning round and facing Lord Pendarves, and from the suddenness of the attack feeling a courage that reflection would not have brought, "I have not trifled with her affections in any way; that I deeply love Miss Moncrieff is perfectly true, and, thank God, she cares about me, and will, I trust, be my wife some day. Knowing your wish that I should marry some one with money, I did not like to annoy you by telling you this till you were stronger. When you see Evelyn Moncrieff, I can but think that you will approve of my choice. You know that I am not ambitious, and that a quiet life in the country has always been my idea of happiness. Grandfather, you will like her and be kind to her, won't you?"

Lord Pendarves had been sitting in silent amazement while Basil delivered himself of this long sentence. When he had finished, however, his grandfather's wrath burst forth:—

"How can you dare to stand there and talk such infernal nonsense to me, you young fool; as if by any

possibility I should dream of allowing such a thing! It's perfectly absurd. There is not a shilling on the girl's side, and you know you are dependent on me; and as to my giving you money, if you choose to marry in defiance of my wishes, you may take the consequences, and fish for yourself, and that's all about it;" and then, changing his tone he said: "O Basil, my boy, you wouldn't wreck all the hopes I have so long cherished. I would give in to you in anything but that; but it would be ruination, simply ruination. You cannot live on what you have of your own. You'll get over this, lad."

"Never," said Basil. "I am nearly twenty-seven and never was in love before, so I'm not likely to make any mistake about the matter now. Oh, if you would only believe me that I don't care for money or anything, but being quietly happy with a woman I love, in a little home of my own. I would get something to do, and so provide for a family, if one came. It's the only chance of happiness for me," he pleaded, "and as for her feelings, they are as deeply engaged as mine. Would to God I was more worthy of her!"

"Whew!" said Lord Pendarves, "she can't be such a very nice young woman to entangle a fellow and engage herself to him—which is, I suppose, what I am

to conclude from your announcement—without telling any one."

"Don't blame her for that," said Basil. "Oh, what have I done for you, Evelyn!" he exclaimed. "Believe me, my Lord, it was only at my earnest entreaties that she consented to a secret engagement. The blame is mine, and mine alone. If only you could know her worth."

"Of course, you think all that now; but take my advice and break off the thing quietly; go abroad for a couple of months. I'll give you any money you may want to pay your expenses, and then next spring try your hand with Miss Mackenzie or this girl here; you are far too good to throw yourself away like this."

In this strain Basil and Lord Pendarves talked for an hour, when at last they were joined by Lord Luxborough, who might have heard Lord Pendarves' last observation had he been attending: "Well, Basil, you know my mind now. Not one shilling do you have of my money from this day forth, unless you give up this girl; and I shall write to Parker to-night to cancel my will, and come down and see me about another."

CHAPTER XXXI.

LOVE AND DUTY.

“ The thorns I reap are of the tree I planted,
They have torn me and I bleed ;
I might have known what fruit would spring from such
a seed.”

IN the evening Lord Pendarves was announced to be suffering from a relapse, and an attack of heart, and intimated a wish to see no one. To Basil the time passed miserably ; he had not moral courage to face his difficulties, even by thinking them over, but sat in a state of dull grief all the evening, hardly summoning energy to answer the boys, who announced to him, with radiant glee, that a letter had come from the headmaster at Eton, to say, that in consequence of a royal marriage, the boys were to have another week's holiday.

Lady Luxborough, who had had enough of their company, announced that “ she didn't in the least feel grateful to the Queen for these kindnesses, and that she wished she would let it alone.”

Gerald Hinton saw that something was wrong with

Basil, and followed him to his room to ask if he felt worried or anxious about his grandfather, or if he would like his advice, to which Basil answered, "No, thank you," in a voice that did not lead to further conversation; so, seeing that he could not help him, Gerald left him alone.

Several days passed thus, and Lord Pendarves, who had rallied, using every argument in his power to persuade Basil to give up Evelyn, worked upon his feelings, by representing the misery he would entail on her as well as himself. Basil had not heard from her since the day when Lady Luxborough had chanced to see the letter. The Franklands and their young guest had been travelling south. He began to realize that something must be done at once towards settling the matter. He had just the same great love for Evelyn, but he could not face the difficulties he saw before him. He walked up and down the room in an agony of mind, then sat down and began to write. He began six or seven letters before he could in the least frame one that expressed his misery; at last, with tears in his eyes, he finished the following letter:---

"MY DEAREST EVELYN,--I cannot tell you, and you will never guess, the agony of mind in which I sit down to write to you, when I feel that what I *must* say

must cause you pain, and is to me the crushing of every hope of earthly happiness I entertained. My darling—let me call you so once more—I do not know how my grandfather found out our attachment, but he has done so, and for the last week I have led a miserable life. He is furious with me, and declares that as to help or prospects from him, I shall never have another shilling. What can I do? He is still very ill, and the doctor tells me that the excited state in which he is, is very likely to prove fatal to him. Can I dare ask you to wait? Indeed, I cannot. You know my miserable fortune; we could not live on it as I know you ought to live. Do not think that ever again I can be happy. I can only do what I hope and pray is for the best, and release you from your engagement. Evelyn, have mercy on me, and do not hate me. I am too utterly wretched. Never, as long as I live, shall your bit of hair leave my breast, or your ring my finger. Oh! do not regret me; some one will make you happier than I could have done; but no one will love you as I do, and shall for ever. Will you think of me sometimes, and pray that I may not continue the idle, useless being I have been? My grandfather once well, I shall try to get some Government clerkship, or something to do. It seems as if it could not be true that the intense happiness I had hoped for is so utterly smashed. I ask

myself again and again, what is right, till I get dazed with thinking; and I wonder how far my grandfather is right in exacting what he does from me."

Much in this strain wrote Basil, when at last, in utter misery, his head dropped on his arms, crossed on the table. He groaned aloud. Long he sat there, till voices roused him from his grief, and, hastily folding his letter, he sealed it, and as his eye caught the motto above his crest, "*Data fata secutus*," a bitter smile came over his face, as he felt it was indeed an ill fortune he was following now. He took up the letter, and cramming his hat over his eyes, he walked to the post. Even when he had got there he walked up and down in front of the Post Office for twenty minutes before he summoned up courage to post it; and when the letter was dropped in the box, a shiver, as if he was in great pain, ran through his body. Then he walked home, and locked himself in his room still in a state of mind hard to be described. Later in the day he walked into his grandfather's room, and said to him, "I have done as you wished, grandfather—gone far, I expect, to break the heart of the one soul I love in the world; and now I hope you will not think I want your money. I will receive no allowance from you. I could not marry Miss Moncrieff unless you would help me; but that being

the case, she shall not think I prefer money to her ; she will not know it," he said very sadly, " but I can receive no more money from you. I shall try and get something to do ; and from here I must go at once. I hope always to be a dutiful grandson to you ; but of the past, unless you have changed your views, I would rather never speak."

Lord Pendarves lifted his head in utter astonishment. He had never dared to think he should be able to bend Basil's will to his. He said at last, " Basil, lad, thank Heaven you are a free man ; as for the money, we will talk of it another time, and don't bother yourself about a profession. You will be all right in a few days. Much better stay. Luxborough expects some people I want you to meet, and Gilbert and your sister are coming."

" It's out of the question ; I must go," said Basil firmly. " I'm going to tell Charles Hay about this, no one else ; and I trust to you not to mention it ; and now goodbye, grandfather, I must go at once. I cannot bear this misery and inaction combined. Remember, I can receive no more money."

A week after this Basil heard from Lady Frankland that she had returned, and that Evelyn Moncrieff, she imagined, had caught cold on the journey, for that she was desperately ill, at her cousin's. Was it Basil's punishment that took this form ?

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

“ Ah ! foolish choice of treasure here ;
Ah ! fatal love of tempting gold :
Must this base world be bought so dear,
And life and heaven so cheaply sold ! ”

WATTS.

THE beginning of December, three months after, was bright, frosty weather, which had prematurely stopped all hunting ; the sun was shining a bright red ball in the sky, reflected on the dry, shining streets. Bond Street looked almost cheerful, despite the winter, as Basil St. John and Charles Hay were walking back about two o'clock from the City, where Basil had spent the morning. He had finally settled with the principals of a house, and he had entered business, as he found he was too old for any Government office. He looked pale and thin, and the once bright look had faded away completely. A sad expression of weariness was the prevalent idea when you caught his face in repose. Evelyn's long illness had been a desperate and fearful trial to

him; and though he had tried hard to reconcile it to his conscience, he could not do so.

Lady Luxborough, strange to say, had been very kind when she heard of what had happened, and had given Lord Pendarves what she called a bit of her mind; and now that Evelyn was beginning to recover, invited her to Ampfield Court. But she, poor girl, was utterly prostrated with the grief that had come on her. Her first feeling had been for Basil and his sorrow; and though she had been such a sufferer herself during her tedious illness, no word of reproaching feeling had ever crossed her lips. She had sent him one line only:—

“DEAREST BASIL,—It was Kismet, and I must bear it. Dinna forget; I never shall. And dinna fash, darling. It must be for the best. God bless you for ever and ever.”

Basil had told the whole story to Charlie, who could not understand his not braving the difficulties; he now begged him to stick to work, and try and get on in that way. Basil continued to feel miserable. One day Charlie had confided to Basil his deep attachment to Susan Mackenzie, and the determined self-control which had enabled him to refrain from letting her know of this

love, because he thought it was unreturned; now he had determined to go abroad on some business for his office, for a year or two; and yet it was now the ever-recurring thought—

“ The morning star of life and light,
That seen became a part of sight,
And rose where'er he turned his eye—
The morning star of Memory.”

So it was but natural that these two had been always together all through the dreary November days. They habitually dined together at their Clubs, varying their monotonous evenings as well as the season of the year permitted, and trying to make the best of their sadness. Lord Pendarves had endeavoured in vain to make Basil accept the old allowance. This he refused to do; and his only aim now was to save every shilling he could, so as to try and secure enough independence to enable him, perchance, at some future day,—if she could be induced again to listen to him,—to offer it to Evelyn. On this special afternoon they were enjoying the sunshine which had succeeded much murky weather; Basil was in rather better spirits, having heard through his sister that Evelyn had been ordered to Weymouth, and seemed to like the idea of a change, and, in fact, was rallying. They loitered slowly up Bond Street, as Basil

was anxious to go to Purdey's shop to negotiate an exchange of guns; they had commented on some new photographs in Asprey's window, when, as they were crossing Grafton Street, they saw a well-known face in a carriage standing at London & Ryder's door; and there, clad in purple velvet, and with bonnet with innumerable feathers, sat Lady Charlotte Mackenzie. Before they had time to speak the shop door opened, and to their astonishment Susan Mackenzie appeared; her face lighted up, and she blushed deeply as she shook hands with them both, whilst she and Lady Charlotte expressed much pleasure at seeing them. "So lucky," Lady Charlotte began; "I had very nearly gone to Redmayne's to buy a match for my *moiré antique*, to make a new body, you know, my dear, but I thought I would wait for Susan's opinion; and if I had not waited, you would never have known the carriage, as it is not Susan's."

Charlie had no time to speak a word to Susan, who was busily talking to Basil about Lady Frankland, with whom she corresponded. She had heard of Evelyn's illness, and though at first she had been furious with Basil, yet, when now she saw his pale, sad face, woman-like she relented, and tried to bring a smile to it, and spoke cordially to him, which Charlie, though he was

apparently engrossed in his conversation with Lady Charlotte, did not fail to notice.

"What are you doing in London?" said Lady Charlotte, at last turning to Basil; "I thought you never came near the place out of the season, and you say you have been here since September."

"I have been trying to do what I have now accomplished,—that is, get some work to do. I was sick of my idle life; and as beggars must not be choosers, I was obliged to pocket my dignity, 'and go into the City;' and you must look upon me in future as a business man. I don't pretend to say I like sitting upon a high stool doing accounts all day; but, O dear, that's a small item in my troubles," and he sighed heavily.

"Ah! I have heard something of a great trouble of yours," replied Lady Charlotte kindly; "but maybe some day things will come right again."

"Never for me, I am afraid," said he; "but we won't talk of it, please, Lady Charlotte."

"Will you and Mr. Hay come and join us at the winter Exhibition? We are going to look at some drawings of Mr. Birket Foster's, and shall be there in an hour," said Susan, as she drove off. The young men agreed to go. When there, Basil fell to the elder lady's

share, who entertained him with an account of parish troubles, and the misdeeds of the schoolmistress. Charlie meanwhile stood with Susan, apparently intently examining a picture, which hardly seemed to deserve so much notice, inasmuch as it depicted two primroses and three green apples; but neither of them had the least idea what they were looking at, so earnest was their conversation about Basil and his prospects at first, and from thence they went on to his love-making. Susan condemned him strongly for having, as she said, trifled with Evelyn's affections, and made her so miserably ill.

Charlie stood up for his friend, and told her how far the more wretched of the two Basil had been, talked of his utter misery when she was ill, and he powerless to help her in any way. From that they talked of the old times at Glen Cannisp. As they talked, Charlie could but realize that absence had only doubled his deep love for Susan, that she was far more dear than ever, and that it became imperative on him to leave her, as he could not see any signs of her preference for him. Here she had been talking of nothing but Basil; and a shade of doubt came through his mind as to whether after all she did not prefer Basil to himself. He therefore never alluded to any change in his own plans. They

stayed on talking till it was nearly dark ; and Charlie had settled that he should not see her again before he went abroad, when, as they were parting, Lady Charlotte, with whom Charlie was a great favourite, said, "Susan, you were talking of going to see the *Duke's Motto*, and why should not we go to-morrow ? I dare say these gentlemen will escort us."

"O yes," said Susan, "do come, and come and dine with us at six ; we are at Claridge's."

They both accepted with pleasure ; and as they walked away both were silent, till Basil said, "I wonder what made Susan Mackenzie blush so, and look so delighted, Master Charlie ? I suppose it was the pleasure of seeing you," he added quietly. "It could not have been me, for I believe she looks on me as an especial reprobate now."

Charlie answered, "Basil, I don't know what you mean ; but it's cruel to imply she was pleased to see me, and so raise hopes which must be utterly vain. No ; I have no chance with her. She did nothing but talk of your affairs. I must just make the best of a bad job. I don't suppose I shall die of love ; but meanwhile I am awfully down in my luck, and I suppose I shall only feel worse to-morrow night when I have seen her again. What a fool I was to say I should go !"

his arm to Lady Charlotte, who delighted in nothing more than an evening of this kind, and Charlie found himself seated between Susan and a stranger.

The play had hardly begun, and the scene in the trench of the castle was going on. Susan became instantly absorbed in the story, which was new to her. Lady Charlotte's interest was mainly in the baby, and as to whether it would fall, and whether it was real. Between the acts the conversation rather flagged. Charlie could not help it; even his buoyant spirits sank to zero, when he realized that he was obliged to go away from this girl he so desperately loved. Presently, when in the play there came some allusion to the man's exile from Paris, and his love, almost involuntarily Charlie said to his companion, "I wonder whether, after all, my destination will be Europe, or some other continent?"

"What do you mean, Mr. Hay?" said Susan, looking at him with unfeigned surprise.

"Did I not tell you, Miss Mackenzie," he answered sadly, "that I find my present life does not suit me in any way, and that, as I have pretty good interest, I am going as unpaid *attaché* somewhere, but where, I know not."

Susan did not answer a word; and when Charlie

turned from the stage, where his eyes had been steadily fixed while he answered her, he saw that she had turned deadly white, as if she was going to faint. When he looked at her, she said something about the great heat of the house, but hardly seemed able to frame her words.

In an instant it flashed on Charlie that she did care for him, since he could not but see that the moment before she had been very cheerful and bright. At first the revulsion of feeling was almost too much to bear, and then he said very gently, "Yes, Miss Mackenzie, I am going abroad, and forgive me if I allude to my own feelings. I am going because I find that every time I see you I am more wretched when I go away, and yet when the moment comes the temptation is too great to resist being with you. I had not meant to have told you what is so hopeless a case."

Susan started as the word "hopeless" crossed his lips. "Why do you say 'hopeless,' Mr. Hay?" she half-murmured. "I cannot understand what you mean."

"Susan, do not be so cruel as to speak like that, or give me hopes, unless you know what you are saying," and, regardless alike of time and place, his words poured fast into her ear: "You *must* know that I love you deeply and devotedly, and have done

so from the first moment we met. I tried to hide a love which I thought was quite unreturned, and I had not meant to say anything ; but if it is possible, Susan, that you care for me, heiress though you are, I, the penniless, unknown clerk, dare ask you to be my wife ; tell me whether I am too presumptuous once and for all, and I will only adhere to my plan of going abroad, and you shall hear no more of me. Suspense about this is all I cannot bear."

For sole answer, Susan looked at him with bright tears in her eyes, and said, as she placed her hand in his, "I did not mean ever to try you. I always fancied you did not like me, and many and many a time has it made me feel sad and low."

"Is this happiness possible?" said Charlie, as he held her hand tightly clasped in his, regardless of what those behind him would think. As for Basil, he perhaps guessed something of what was passing, and had contrived so to rivet Lady Charlotte's attention on the stage, that she listened to nothing but the fictitious tale being acted before her, and regarded not the last scene of the love-story going on by her side, and which concerned her more.

Long and quietly did Charlie talk to Susan, and told her of his great misery all through this autumn, and

received from her the frank assurance that from the first she had seen his worth, and wondered whether one so good and true would ever care for her—used as she was to those who, she knew, only pretended to like her for interested motives.

“Susan,” he said, “I have so often cursed that money of yours, which, as I fancied, stood in my light and prevented my daring to try and win your love; and now the past seems like an evil dream. How Basil will laugh at me! I told him of my misery. Well, let those laugh that win. How proud I shall be when I make you acquainted with my mother; I am sure your aunt will like her.”

“And dear Aunt Charlotte, I am sure she has no wish except to see me happy; how thankful she will be!”

Charlie talked to her without ceasing till the curtain dropped, and then, as he put her into the carriage, he said to Lady Charlotte, “I’m coming to see you much earlier than you expect to-morrow,” and he and Basil walked away together in silence for a few moments, till at last Charlie Hay stopped suddenly and said, “Well, Basil, old fellow, wish me joy. That dear, good girl does care about me, and has told me so, and it’s all your doing. I never should have said anything excepting for your encouragement. You’ve always

been the best friend in the world to me, and now I feel it more than ever."

Basil wrung his hand heartily, saying, "Yes, Charlie, I guessed how it might be. God bless you. Well, you deserve her in every way, and she is *nearly* good enough to be your wife, and, let me tell you, there are few of whom I should say that."

Lady Charlotte's comment on Charlie's last speech to her made Susan laugh outright, being as follows:—

"Poor, dear young man, coming to say goodbye, I suppose. Mr. St. John told me Mr. Hay was going into diplomacy, and I daresay he wants a little advice as to what outfit he had better take. Don't you think so, my dear?"

"No, you dear Aunt Charlotte, I think he is coming to ask your consent about something concerning you more nearly, and that is, if you will let him take care of me for the future, instead of your doing so. He won't do it half as well, I'm sure," she said, between laughing and crying, as she kissed her aunt affectionately.

"My dear, am I to understand that Mr. Hay has proposed to you, and that you have accepted him? just now, when I had settled to knit him some nice warm stockings to take with him in case he was in cold .

climates. Well, you do surprise me! not but what I'm very glad indeed, my dear child. I have seen few young men so attentive and kind as he is; but how did it come about?"

"Well, Aunt Charlotte, when I come to think of it, I almost think I proposed to him."

"La! my dear, what do you mean?" said Lady Charlotte aghast, and then she added, "Any way, I am pleased and happy enough, and I am sure I am most truly thankful. I never heard but one opinion of Charles Hay; and, Susan dear, now you will be able to wear black velvet and that point lace, and have some one to take care of you when I am dead and gone."

The next few days passed very busily for Charles, and Basil was much with him, helping him in various ways, with settlements and lawyers. All Susan Mackenzie's family were glad of the marriage, and thought it a very sensible proceeding, except the obnoxious Grants, to whom it was gall and wormwood, more especially as old Grant had always in his own circle settled that it was Basil St. John who interfered with his son's prospects. Susan was anxious to settle all she could on Charlie, which he strove as far as he could to prevent, and succeeded to a certain extent. It was very pleasant to see these two

young people together, to watch the pretty way in which she, who so long had only known her own will and pleasure, deferred to him, being thankful to lean on him and trust to him; not that she shirked responsibility, but it had long preyed on her mind that her position was a difficult one to fill, and that she was liable to commit very great mistakes in managing such an estate entirely alone; and now their two heads could be seen bent over leases, and plans of cottages and schools, Susan now and then looking up from the papers to answer Aunt Charlotte in her bright merry way, and then back again she went to the estimates, till her Ladyship declared one day that she thought it the oddest love-making she ever saw, and that nothing was ever so prosaic; but they were both truly and perfectly happy, and thankful for the great joy that had come in their lives. Eminently suited to each other, each had been able, from the circumstances of intimacy in which they had lived in Scotland, thoroughly to know and understand the other's character. Charles Hay knew that in Susan he had found what he had always wished for, a loving, high-spirited, kind-hearted girl, with great common-sense and shrewdness, with high conscientiousness, and a firm belief that she was not put into the world to idle away her opportunities;

and Susan Mackenzie knew she had found a man who had struggled hard to make himself independent, when circumstances, from no fault of his own, had been very much against him, who was light-hearted and cheerful, and with all this had great firmness of character, and an amount of principle such as one seldom meets with.

The wedding was to take place in about two months. When they left London Lady Charlotte and Susan were to go into the country till the time came for the wedding, so as to enable her to make acquaintance with Charlie's belongings.

Basil meanwhile had taken up his work in good earnest; it was a relief to his weary, aching heart to feel that he had something he must do, and though his thoughts and reflections were always and for ever of Evelyn, he not the less cheerfully wended his way every day to the City. That the work was of a kind particularly unpleasing to him was to him a melancholy pleasure; and he gave up his whole attention to this grinding, plodding life. When once he was at his office, occasionally, as the recollection of a bright happy hour at Glen Cannisp came over him, he would bury his head in his hands and groan aloud, as he thought of the misery he had brought to that loving soul, and he felt as if a whole life of dreariness alone could

never be punishment enough for the wreck of her happiness.

Lord Pendarves had been very angry at first when he found Basil adhered to his two resolves to receive no help from him, and to get some work, no matter what. When he found that Basil had entered a house of business he was furious, but this time Basil was firm, and stuck to his work day after day manfully. As might have been expected, the change, after having been all his life out of doors, and in the country, was too much for him, and, after about a month at his desk, he began both to look and feel so ill, that though he persevered, and every day found him at work with his partners, he felt it could not last long. At last one of the partners, a kind-hearted man, who saw with pain his young companion's sad face, suggested to him that a complete change of air and scene would be the best thing for him, and that as it happened there were some bad debts, and some business that required immediate attention at Madrid, he could not do better than undertake these affairs, and go out and see to it.

After some consideration, Basil agreed to go, for he felt as if it might possibly do him good, even though he knew the same sad thoughts would haunt him everywhere. He was to start in a fortnight, and was busy

preparing for it. His partner, Mr. Malet, was a very well-disposed man of about sixty years of age, who owned a large villa at Acton, a good-natured and not over-refined wife and two daughters,—heiresses in their way,—both of them handsome young women, who were not ill disposed to make much of their father's good-looking young partner. Mr. Malet, in compassion for Basil's forlorn appearance, would often insist on driving him down to his house to share the six o'clock dinner with his family, and to get a breath of fresh air. The young ladies succeeded in persuading Basil that both he and they were musical, and led him to dawdle away many an afternoon at Acton during the fortnight of interval before he left for Spain. They were undeniably vulgar; and often their expressions and ways jarred on Basil's refined ear; but anything was better than being alone and thinking over his miseries by himself in his lodging, for now he could not be so much as usual with Charles Hay, who was naturally engrossed with his own affairs.

Poor Basil! he was now reaping the bitter consequences of his weakness. He had almost quarrelled with Lady Frankland for the way in which she had spoken of Evelyn Moncrieff, and her undisguised triumph when the marriage was broken off, so that the society of the Malets was all he had to fall back on.

One evening, when at Fir Hill, as the villa was named, he met Lord Luxborough at dinner, who had come down to consult Mr. Malet about the expediency of buying some shares in a new mining company, in which Mr. Malet's name appeared as a director. He was very kind and pleasant in his manner to Basil, and had sincere pity for him. He had in vain tried to make Lord Pendarves hear reason, and had told him it was cruel to his grandson; but it had been of no avail, and he knew that Basil's engagement was quite at an end.

Now, Lord Luxborough was a very worthy man, but one of small penetration, and seeing Basil at Mr. Malet's, and also seeing that the handsome, striking Miss Mary and Miss Geraldine Malet were both making up to Basil, and he, in his indolent way, allowing himself to be made much of, it was no very surprising conclusion that the old gentleman drew: that Basil was in a fair way to console himself for his recent disappointment, by marrying one of old Malet's co-heiresses; and the old peer did not think he was likely to make mischief in saying something to that effect to his lady. She was pleased to have what she considered her bad opinion of Basil St. John confirmed; and, in her turn, meeting General Tremaine at a neighbour's house, told him, in the sort of way in which people unconsciously exaggerate what they hear, that she heard it was all but settled

that Mr. St. John was to marry one of these girls, but that he was to go to Spain first. The feelings with which the General listened to this announcement were of a mixed nature. The first was one of sorrow, that the girl of whom he was so very fond should receive so desperate a blow as he knew this would be; and the second was a half hope that perchance she might listen to the prayer he would now address to her. He said, however, very little to Lady Luxborough, except to express a hope that his young friend would be found at last to have pleased his grandfather. In this manner originated a rumour which seriously affected the happiness of several parties in our story. As for Basil himself, nothing could possibly have been further from his thoughts, and no rumour of what was being said was ever repeated to him. His whole heart was entirely Evelyn's; in his innermost soul he had but one wish—to see her once again, and to implore her forgiveness for all the sorrow that he had brought into her bright young life; and to tell her that he was trying to act up as far as he could to all her advice, even though he was parted from her. He was to go immediately to Madrid, and the business there would involve a stay of two or three months.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN ACHING HEART.

“A weary lot is thine, fair maid,
A weary lot is thine !
To pull the thorn thy brow to braid,
And press the rue for wine.
A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
A feather of the blue,
A doublet of the Lincoln green,
No more of me you knew
 My Love !
No more of me you knew !”

WE will turn to our heroine, who was now staying at Weymouth with a distant connexion. She had been ordered there by her doctor when recovering from her illness, and, at the time we see her first again, she was being drawn in a bath-chair on the pier. She liked to be placed at the extreme end of it, with her face to the sea, and left there for hours to think. She had a book in her hand, which was open before her ; but though her eyes now and then rested on the page, her thoughts were miles away ; and as she lifted her sad blue eyes one could see that tears swam in them very often, and her thin fingers would press Basil's ring

tightly. Now she murmurs to herself, "I may wear it till he is married. It was cruel, Basil, not to send me a line. No one would have wished you happiness, as I would, my darling, O my darling!" and the tear which had been gathering fell now on the book before her.

"I'm a fool to give way like this," she thought; "it's being weak and ill, I think. I have so much to be thankful for. Augusta Frankland really wrote quite a kind letter this morning, and the dear, good old General, he cannot do too much for me. I'm so glad he was here. I never saw so kind or attentive an old man. Well, this life cannot last for ever, there's that comfort in all one's troubles. Rest will come at last. There, I will not be such an idiot," and she lifted the book and began reading. It was *Barchester Towers*, but even its most pleasant pages could not rivet her attention, and she fell again into a reverie, to be roused by a shadow falling on the book, and a kind voice saying, "My dear, are you not cold? I was sent out to bring you in."

"O no, General, thank you so much; indeed, I'm not; it does me a great deal of good sitting out here."

"I think you must be cold: will you come with me and take a little walk on the Noth opposite; you will see the sunset on Portland Island, and there are several fresh ships in the harbour."

"O yes, I'll come," she said, "I'm so much better, that I really think after this week I shall give up the bath-chair altogether."

They descended the steps and crossed the ferry, and slowly, leaning on his arm, Evelyn reached the top of the now fortified tongue of land jutting into the sea, called the 'Noth, from which there is a lovely view of Portland and the surrounding country.

It was very pretty to see the General's gentleness and tenderness to this young girl, and the way in which he selected a sheltered place for her to rest in, and then spread cloaks and things for her; and when her eye brightened and she thanked him, his face became radiant, and it seemed as if he could not do enough to take care of her.

Poor girl! it was sad to see the change that two months had produced in her young face. But she listened quietly to all that the General told her of the fortifications and the works on Portland Isle, and strove to take an interest in it.

Suddenly he said "Oh, my dear child, I forgot; here's a letter for you, it came by the second post." Her eye looked wistfully at the direction, as though hoping to see a handwriting which now never met her eye. But it was only a momentary expression. "Susan Macken-

zie!" she said, and she just opened it, read a few lines, and put the letter in her pocket, saying, "It will keep, I think."

The General then said, "I had a letter from Lady Luxborough this afternoon, dear Evelyn."

"Well, what does she say—anything I shall care to hear about?" asked Evelyn, with a forced cheerfulness of manner.

"She tells me that Lord Luxborough had been in London, and had been dining with his old *protégé*, the now rich Mr. Malet," said the General, pausing to see how his words affected her, and if she attached any importance to the name.

"Mr. Malet?" exclaimed Evelyn, colouring painfully, "isn't that where—"

"It is the house St. John has gone into, my dear, and a very flourishing one."

"Does she say anything about him?" said Evelyn, after a few moments' pause. "Please, please tell me," she added, seeing the General hesitate.

"My dear little girl," he said, very tenderly taking her hand in his, "she mentions a report, in which there is perhaps no truth, that Basil St. John has yielded to his grandfather's bullying, and on his return from Spain is to marry one of the daughters of Mr. Malet."

Evelyn only said, "I had heard a rumour of this before. Go on, please; tell me all." And her hand, though she little knew it, held the General's so tight that it absolutely pained him.

"There is nothing more to tell you, my dear," he said. "I thought I had better tell you myself, than let you hear it from some perfect stranger."

"Yes, it is very kind of you," said Evelyn, and she shuddered as if cold. "Poor Basil! I don't think he will be happy if he marries for money. I hope—oh, I do hope—she is a nice, good girl, who will care for him and make him happy. Tell me about her, please."

"I don't know anything more than I have said, or I would tell you directly," answered the General, who had watched anxiously to see how she received the announcement. "I hope indeed he will be happy, though I think it is more than he deserves."

"Don't say that; oh please, never say that again," said Evelyn, "neither to me or to any one," and she turned her face beseechingly to him. "I somehow never doubted or shall doubt his love for me, any more than it would occur to me to doubt my own feelings to him. If he does marry, it will be because his grandfather has talked him into it, and because he is very miserable; but though he may marry, and be very good

and kind to his wife, I don't think he will ever care for any one as he did for me. Well, whatever he does, God bless him ! And now, dear General, take me home, I'm very much tired," she said ; "and don't judge me harshly. You have been very, very good to me through all this weary time, and I never shall forget it. At one time I hoped to die when I was very weak and ill, but as I got better the feeling passed away. I suppose there is something for me to do ; and I don't mean to give way. I can't pretend to forget ; but I will try and not sadden others. And now, come home. I've got Susan's letter to read. We will not talk of this again, please ; only, if you see him, tell him I do wish him every happiness, and tell him not to be sad about me."

The whole of that evening Evelyn stayed in her own room, worn out with the excitement and trouble consequent on what she had heard. That she loved Basil just as much as she ever had done, she could not conceal from herself ; and now she must try and banish his image from her heart. "Was it possible ?" she said ; and then she leant her head on her hand, and the tears would run slowly down her wan cheeks, and she felt as if it was hard indeed to forgive Lord Pendarves all the misery he had brought on her.

Susan's letter lay forgotten in her pocket for two days, till some chance brought it to her recollection; and she found on reading it that it contained an earnest entreaty that if she was well enough she would come and be her bridesmaid. It was very tenderly worded, so as to give her a chance to refuse did it seem too much for her; but very warmly and truthfully did Susan represent that it would be the greatest happiness to her. Evelyn, when she had finished the letter and postscript, containing these words—"Charlie tells me that Mr. St. John is going to Madrid for three months on business for Mr. Malet; he gets on famously in his new profession,"—said to herself, "I suppose Susan thinks it would hurt me too much to hear that he was going to be married, and so she does not allude to it. Can I go to this wedding? O no; it's quite impossible!" she thought; "I will write and decline at once." She took up her pen for that purpose, and glanced again at Susan's kind and affectionate letter. Then she meditated for some little time, and wound up by determining to go, and not to give way any more to herself. "He will not be there, and I have six weeks to prepare myself. I know it is not right not to struggle against all these morbid feelings; and then every one is so good to me, even Lady Luxborough was very kind—

for her—when she met me to-day ; and as for the dear old General, I think him an angel.”

So Evelyn despatched her letter to Susan Mackenzie, telling her that she would come up two days before the wedding, and entering with heartfelt warmth into her friend's happiness.

CHAPTER XXXV.

REPENTANCE.

“ And she was nothing now to him, nor he
Aught unto her ; but each of each did dream
In the still hours of thought, when we are free
To quit the real world for the things which seem.

So in his heart she dwelt, as one may dwell
Upon the verge of a forbidden ground,
And oft he struggled hard to break the spell,
And banish her, but vain the effort found.”

HON. MRS. NORTON.

A FEW days before Basil's departure for Spain, when he was sitting in his office collecting the letters and papers he was to take with him, the door opened, and Charlie Hay looked in.

“ Hallo, Charlie ! What brings you east of Temple Bar ? I haven't seen you for some days. I'm off by Saturday.”

“ Are you indeed, Basil ? Well, I shall miss you dreadfully, I can tell you ; but I think you are wise to go. What's the good of grinding like this ? why, man, you look like a ghost ! ”

"Do I?" said Basil. "Well, it does not much signify what I look like." And he leant his head down on his desk in his old attitude.

"That's nonsense. Now, put away these things, and come out and take a walk with me. I'm a free man this afternoon, for Susan and her aunt are buying all sorts of female toggery, and told me my room was better than my company; and so I walked down to you," said Charlie.

"I'll be ready in five minutes. There, read the *Times*." And Basil's head became again bent over the paper with a worn, anxious look; and several times he passed his hand across his forehead, as if he could not attend to or understand what he was about. Charles, who was watching him, and not reading the paper, was grieved to see how thin and transparent his hands looked. At last he finished, and turned to Charlie, saying, "I'm so sorry to have been so long; but the fact is, my intellects, which were never very bright, are worse than ever; and sometimes I read the simplest thing over twenty times before I can understand it."

"You want change, old fellow; and sorry as I am to lose you, I'm glad you are going," said Charlie.

"Well, it may do me good, but I don't expect it. At all events, I shall have the satisfaction of thinking I am for once of a little use; but oh, Charlie, it's up-hill work

going on with no prospect of happiness before you, and feeling that you have smashed that of the one soul in the world you would have died for. But it's no use thinking of it now. On my honour, I tried to do what I thought was right at the time; though now I see it all in a different light. You believe this; don't you, Charlie?"

"Yes, I do indeed," answered Charles Hay. "I do think you were grievously tried. That I should have done differently does not now matter; but the person I *do* blame is Lord Pendarves; I think he acted unpar-donably."

"You must not blame him," exclaimed Basil. "I was a weak fool to give way; for I feel now so sure that Evelyn would have been content with poverty, and that it was really my own selfishness which was at the bottom of it. You can't blame me more than I have blamed myself, or feel more as if nothing I could ever do would make amends to her, even did it lie in my power to do anything. Now even my health seems giving way, and that was the only chance I had to get on now."

"Don't be so sad about it, Basil. I am sure, from all I ever saw of Evelyn Moncrieff, that she will struggle worthily with sorrow, and that she will not blame you; if there is a person upon whose forgiveness you might depend, it is hers."

"Yes, I know that well enough," said Basil very sadly; "but what is for ever and ever before my eyes is, that I have so blighted the life of one who was a few months ago the most light-hearted and joyous being I ever met. I am always seeing her as she was when first we met her, Charlie; and when I go to bed the same vision comes again and again in my dreams."

"I am sure," said Charles Hay, "though for a long time she may suffer, that ultimately she will rally; her nature is buoyant and elastic, thank God, poor girl! and I think she may have much happiness before her in the future, at least I have mistaken her simple, truthful, conscientious nature, if it is not so."

"God grant it may!" answered Basil. "Charlie, you may very likely see her one day, as she is your intended wife's great friend; if ever you do, will you tell her that I dared not write and ask her forgiveness, but that as long as I live her blessed example will be before me, and that I shall try not to '*rust out*?' If you will tell her this, and then tell her to forget that I ever crossed her path, you will make me much happier; will you?"

"I will, Basil. Don't fret so much now about a past that you cannot alter; but remember—and don't think me presumptuous, old fellow,—that there is much scope for your usefulness in the future; don't think your life is so very hopeless. And now," he said, after a

pause, "tell me about your future plans after Madrid, and what you are going to do there, if you can do so without revealing trade secrets. Dear me, that I should live to see you turned into 'a man connected with trade,'" he said laughing, "you who always held your head so high in these matters! How do you like it?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, I dislike it more than I can say, but I look upon it as my duty, and am determined to stick to it, though my grandfather is most dreadfully shocked at the whole business, and does nothing but entreat me to take my old allowance, and go back to my old life; but that, thank God, is gone for ever, with all its follies and wasted time. I cannot take any money from him, though I am on very good terms with him. He does what he can for me in the way of writing to me, and is always wanting me to go down to him, and be with him. I shall run down and say good-bye to him before I go. He is in the country now."

They talked in this strain of his future and his duties for a long time, and parted, mutually sorry to say good-bye. Charlie wanted Basil to come in and dine with Susan and Lady Charlotte, but he said that he could not, and that it brought too vividly before him all his past happiness and his present troubles.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN OLD MAN'S DARLING.

"Thine eyes' blue tenderness, thy long fair hair,
And the wan lustre of thy features, caught
From contemplation—where, serenely wrought,
Seems sorrow's softness charm'd from its despair,
That, but I know thy blessed bosom fraught
With mines of unalloy'd and stainless thought,
I should have deem'd thee doom'd to earthly care."

BYRON, *To Ginevra*.

EVELYN MONCRIEFF stayed on with her relation, Mrs. Manwaring, for a long time, and the General also lingered on. It only wanted a week now to the time of the wedding, and she had gained in health so much that she had little fear of not being strong enough to attend it; she was able to walk about, and ride with the General on the Downs. He was determined to do all he could to amuse her, and had sent to his home, which was not far distant, for a beautiful Arab he possessed, and had insisted on her riding with him two or three times a week.

Nothing more had she heard of Basil or of his move-

"You must not speak of him so, General; pray do not; it hurts me so very much. Still, though appearances are all against him, I do think he loved me very much; but we will not talk of him. You will let me be your daughter and take care of you, and be with you often, won't you?" and she said apologetically, "don't let me lose the one friend I have in the world."

"Evelyn, you must forget that these words ever passed my lips," said the General, as they drew near the house; "I was a fool to think of you as my wife; you will always be more dear to me than any human being on earth; and you will be kind, I know, to the old man. God bless you, my dear, and make you happy. I have no more earnest wish than that." He lifted her off her horse with a sad expression on his face, very different from his usual good-tempered, happy one.

As they parted, Evelyn said, "If you can forgive me, I do hope you will be with us as you have been before. I have only a day or two more here before I go home for a day to get my things before I go up to town."

"O yes; of course I mean to look after you as long as I can, dear child," he answered, as he lifted her hand to his lips. When Evelyn was in her room resting on her sofa, for she was still easily tired, she began to review the events of the day, and to think of the

General's proposal. It grieved her much to have had to give him pain, and not to be able to do what he said would be so much for his happiness; but the more she thought the more thoroughly convinced she was, that in common justice she could marry no one, so long as her whole heart and soul were Basil's. She lay there now thinking of him, for her thoughts soon left the General and went back to the old subject, and she wondered where he was in Spain, and what doing? Did he ever think of her? She knew he did, for in her heart she felt he had loved her too really for two months to have wiped away her image. Should she ever see him again? It was a question she asked herself so often. At all events she would hear of him from Susan, and hear what Miss Malet was like. Oh, how that thought of his wife pained her, and yet she regularly prayed night and morning for the girl Basil was to marry, "that she might be worthy of him, and make him lead a good, happy life." She turned sadly away from the thought of his wife and home; no one could now love him as she did. No one could make his home what she would have done. "O Basil, my darling, God make you happy, and if we are good we shall meet in another world," was her prayer, as the tears coursed each other down her pale cheeks.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A RAY OF SUNSHINE.

" I ask thee not to think of me, when all around is bright,
I bid thee not remember me, when all around is light,
But when some song of former days, that I have sung to thee,
Comes o'er thine ear with sudden strain— O! then remember me."

SUSAN MACKENZIE was sitting over her bedroom fire at Claridge's a few days later, when a knock was heard at the door, and when she had said, " Come in," the door opened, and Evelyn Moncrieff came into the room.

Down went all the boxes containing bracelets and lockets, which she had been putting into their cases, on to the floor, as she exclaimed, " Evelyn, dear, good child, how jolly of you to come up to me! Come here; why, you look sadly tired, dear; come, sit here, and we'll have our tea up here. I *am* glad to see you; it seems ages since we met," and she kissed her warmly, and put her arm round her affectionately.

" Lady Charlotte was out; and so I asked where your room was, and came up to you," said Evelyn. " How well you look, dear, and how pleasant it is to see you

again!" Tell me now all about yourself and your plans."

"I thought it very good of you, being bridemaids. I didn't feel sure that you would say, Yes; I assure you I quite appreciate your kindness in coming. As for plans, I don't know that we have any very special ones, after we come back from Paris, where we go first. We mean to try and be very useful; and Charlie has settled to give up his office and to try some farming at a little place we have in Sussex; and we mean to try also to do a good deal in that way at Achmelvich. Charlie knows something of farming, for when he was eighteen he read with one of the people who take in 'mud students,' meaning to take to it as a profession; only, on second thoughts, his guardian sent him to Oxford. But I don't want to prose about my plans. Tell me what you have been doing at Weymouth. I think it is a very nice place. Who had you there? I hope you had somebody to make it pleasant to you."

"The Luxboroughs came for ten days, and General Tremaine was there nearly all the time, and was very kind to me."

"Oh, was he?" said Susan. "Do you know I once thought he was a devoted admirer of yours, and meant

to ask you to be Mrs. Tremaine. Why do you blush so ? tell me ; oh, do tell me, I'm sure there is something."

" Susan, dear, if I do tell you, you will promise never to tell any one else ; but he did ask me to be his wife."

" And what did you say ?" said Susan, with an expression of the keenest interest on her face.

" What should I say, dear ? It was very good of him to wish it, and to be so kind to me ; but, Susan, it was quite impossible."

" Why so ?" said the girl, leaning her chin on her hand, as she bent forward towards Evelyn.

" Because--because,—Susan, would you have married another man, if things had happened to you as they have to me ? I don't think you would. At all events I couldn't. Married or unmarried, Basil has all the love I have it in my heart to give ; and if he marries this girl, why, it won't hurt her that I should pray for his happiness always ;" and Evelyn sighed wearily.

" What girl ? What are you talking about, Evelyn ?"

" Miss Malet," said Evelyn, " who else should it be ?"

" Miss Malet !" cried Susan, with an expression of great amazement on her face ; " who has been telling you such nonsense as that ? he's no more going to

marry Miss Malet than Charlie is. How can people talk such stuff?"

"Susan, are you sure it is not so? because for weeks I have been trying to make up my mind to the thought, and it would be cruel indeed to deceive me," said Evelyn, who was very pale.

"My dear, I wouldn't deceive you for worlds. I do assure you that Charlie saw Basil just before he left for Spain, and that his one idea then seemed to be so, Charlie said, to try to act up to all you had ever advised him; and then I know he gave him a message to you, to beg you to forgive him; but he will tell you Basil's words. I am quite convinced that no thought of any other woman ever came into his head, as you would know if you had seen him about the time I did. I never saw a man look so ill in my life. Poor fellow! and he was so gentle and kind to Charlie, and helped him to get through a good deal of business which was very tiresome. I never saw a man so improved in my life."

Evelyn lay back on the sofa with her eyes closed while Susan went on talking. A look of peace and thankfulness came over her face, and she said at last,—
"Susan, I can't tell you the good you have done me. I could not bear to think he had forgotten me so soon ;

not that I did quite think that either. When does he come back?"

"Not for two months, I believe. Charlie asked him to give him away, or whatever it is called, and he said he could not possibly come back for the wedding; it was too expensive to come back merely for that. He has become very economical; so different from the way he used to waste his money on his own comforts. Gerald Hinton is to be Charlie's friend on the occasion. What a nice fellow he is! not a bit spoilt, though it seems to me that men and women alike try to do it."

"Yes; I liked him very much when I saw him at Weymouth the other day," answered Evelyn.

"Poor old General Tremaine; I am rather sorry for him," said Susan. "I always said I would have married him myself, had he asked me; but he didn't, and so I had to put up with Charlie."

"Susan, dear," said a voice outside the door, "it's only ten minutes to dinner; are you ready?"

"There's Aunt Charlotte. Evelyn, don't dress; no one but Charlie dines here. His mother comes up to-morrow, so I can't have him to meet you then. He will tell you what Basil said, and you will be more happy, I'm sure. His grandfather is very unpleasant, I think; but, after all, I rather think Basil, having been

brought up as he was by him, was more bound to consider him than perhaps I at first took into account."

At dinner Evelyn was more like her usual self than she had been for months. She entered into all the conversation, and laughed merrily over Charlie's account of the presents he had received. He was very pathetic over a quantity of Greek volumes his old tutor had presented him with, of which he said he could not now understand a word; and a maiden aunt had sent him an enormous papier-maché tea-chest, "big enough for a trunk," he said. Evelyn suggested that they should hand it on to the clergyman, a distant cousin, who was to marry them, to whom they must give a present; to whom they could not give money, as he was a connexion.

Charlie was enchanted with the idea, and pictured to them the Rev. Francis Spalding returning to the bosom of his family laden with this treasure.

Later in the evening, when Lady Charlotte, as usual, fell asleep over her knitting, Susan went upstairs, ostensibly to fetch some of her presents, but really to give Charlie the opportunity of delivering Basil's message to Evelyn, which he did almost immediately; beginning by telling her that he had heard from Basil, and that he asked him whether he had seen Evelyn, and

whether he had given his message to her, for that he yearned for her forgiveness. Charlie repeated Basil's words exactly, and then said, "May I tell him you forgive him?"

"No; tell him I have nothing whatever to forgive, and that I hope he will try and be happy, and not fret about me; that I am quite well again now," said Evelyn. "Is he strong again himself?" she added, after a little pause.

"Nothing to boast about, I'm afraid," said Charlie; "but I made him promise to come to us at Easter, if he is back in time."

Here Susan appeared, laden with trinkets, which she threw into Evelyn's lap, saying, "I like your present the best of all I have had, and shall always use that pencil-case."

Charlie got up and said he must go. He was not to see Susan again till he met her at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge. He had been in residence in Belgravia, on purpose to enable Susan to be married at her favourite church. His last words to her of their whispered conversation were, "Goodbye, darling. You have only thirty-six hours more to be your own mistress, so make the most of it. And cheer up, poor little Evelyn; I wish we could see her as happy as we are."

He lit his cigar and walked home, meditating on life and its vicissitudes, and upon the very narrow chance he had had of losing all this happiness. He walked quickly and got to his rooms, and ran up, meaning to finish writing some letters, and arrange a few bills and papers, and was rather surprised to see a light in his window, and still more, when he got into the room, to find that a man was lying asleep on the sofa, with his coat off. The light was bright in the room, and coming from the outer darkness, for an instant Charlie did not see who it was till the head was raised, and to his utter astonishment he beheld the face of Basil St. John.

"Basil ! why, what on earth has brought you here ?" he exclaimed, as soon as he could at all recover his astonishment.

"Tell me I'm welcome, any way," said Basil. "The fact was, that I have been getting worse and worse ever since I left England, and the doctor at Madrid told me that the climate would kill me if I stayed, and that I had best get back as quick as I could ; so back I came, and I've been getting better ever since my face was set homewards. When I got to England I could have screamed with pleasure. I suppose I was home-sick, or something of that kind. When I arrived in London, I could not be sure whether you were married or not ; so I


came on here from your old lodgings, and your landlady gave me some supper, for I was too tired to go to the Club; and here I am, and that's about all my history. I'm happy to say the Spaniards proved better pay than we expected, so I had finished the business part of my expedition, and only gave up the excursions to Seville and Barcelona, etc. When are you to be married?"

"The day after to-morrow, at St. Paul's, at 11.30. You will come of course. It was your first promise to see me through my marriage ceremony. I can't now ask you to be best-man, for Gerald Hinton was asked when you failed, and I can't say, 'Be off; here's a greater chum returned.' It wouldn't be manners, you know. My mother and the sisters come up to-morrow. Augusta and Edith sent excuses, but Lord Pendarves is coming up on purpose. I hear he gives out that he considers me a model young man—for marrying an heiress, I suppose; I don't know what else it can be; and so he comes up, *pour encourager les autres*, I imagine. What a nice, kind, unselfish old soul Lady Charlotte is! Did I tell you she is to live at the place in Sussex which belongs to her? and Susan could not get her to take anything of all the old furniture or plate she was so fond of. And as to living on with us, she

would not hear of it, and says she has no idea of not leaving young people to find their level."

Charlie then proceeded to descant to Basil on Susan's perfections, which he listened to patiently, but through which we need not follow him. He did not tell Basil that Evelyn was in town, and that he would meet her at the wedding. He turned it well in his mind, and settled that it was better not for both parties.

It was very late when they parted, and all that passed on the subject of Evelyn was, that Charlie told Basil that he had given the message to her, and repeated the words of her answer. "Thank God" was all he said, and went home, more resolved than ever to stick to his work through thick and thin, and to get something of a district amongst the poor, to work out his spare hours in usefulness.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MARRIED AND DONE FOR.

“ Now Hymen at the altar stands,
And while he joins their faithful hands,
Behold ! by ardent vows drawn down,
Immortal Concord, heav'nly bright,
Descends, th' auspicious rite to crown.”

ELEVEN o'clock was striking at St. Paul's as the first detachment drove up to the church door, and found, as usual, a small and unselect crowd assembled to watch the smart ladies descend from their carriages, and crowded near the carriage-door, to be officiously pushed on one side by a self-constituted authority, in the shape of a sweeper, whom the magnificent powdered footmen, however, treated with a degree of contempt equal to that which he had displayed to the smaller urchins. Carriage followed carriage in quick succession, and the ladies shivered as, in their light, thin attire, they waited in the aisle of the church, and talked in loudish whispers, much as they might have talked in the crush-

room at the opera. A large party were soon assembled, for though it was the dead time of year, the Clan Mackenzie mustered strong, many anxious to see the last of the heiress under her maiden name.

Both bride and bridegroom were very popular people, and, for a wonder, no one but the Grants grudged Charlie his good luck. Among her relations he had made many acquaintances, and a few friends, since the engagement had been made known, and all agreed that she had done a wise thing. Susan was much loved by her belongings, being kind, liberal, and just in her dealings with them. Five of the six bridemaids dropped in by degrees, looking very cold in their white dresses. Presently arrived the bridegroom and Gerald, the former looking as awkward and shy as bridegrooms generally do, and plunging into a forced conversation with an attendant curate. Then arrived, to the astonishment of all, Lord Pendarves, leaning on Basil's arm. He was instantly greeted by Lord Luxborough and General Tremaine with great glee. He looked taller, thinner, and whiter than ever—quite a Conte Ugolino appearance about him, as one of the bridemaids announced. He seemed to have no eyes for any one but Basil, and made him stand by his side rather in the background. The Grants had also arrived, though

it was a bitter pill to swallow; still, as the thing must be, and they could not stop it, they thought it better to keep in with the future master. Old Grant was servile in his acknowledgments of Charles Hay's nod, and rushed across to him, and shook his hand as though he would shake it off, assuring him at the same time that this marriage was the one thing he had wished for dear Susan, and that he had always said so from the first day he saw Charles,—all of which Charlie took at what it was worth, having a recollection of some confidences of Susan *à propos* of the younger Grant.

Just as the clock struck the half-hour, punctuality itself, in the shape of Lady Charlotte, drove to the door, having in her roomy old-fashioned coach the bride, the cousin who was to give her away, and Evelyn Moncrieff, the sixth and last bridesmaid. The bride looked as lovely as brides can be seen to look, through all the tulle and veils that conceal their faces and figures alike. Lady Charlotte was in her element. A wedding afforded her intense satisfaction, and she never failed to attend every one that she possibly could. To-day she was radiant in the splendour of purple brocade and India shawl; full of anxiety for Susan, lest she should faint (than which nothing was

further from her intentions); then in a fuss lest they should not be married in canonical hours, or that they should not catch the train; in short, she was perfectly happy.

Evelyn followed the bride closely, hardly raising her eyes, and when she did so, not distinguishing in the least one face from another. She looked very pale and thin, and the expression of her face was one of quiet sadness.

Suddenly Basil saw her, though she saw him not, and gave so violent a start, that his grandfather, who was leaning on his arm, looked up in surprise, and asked him what was the matter.

"Oh, nothing," Basil said; and as the service had now begun there was no more conversation.

Charlie Hay looked far more nervous and excited than Susan, whose manner was particularly quiet and composed. She seemed to enter into every word of the beautiful service, and repeated her share very clearly in her sweet, fresh voice. Evelyn's eyes filled with tears as she listened to the exhortation, and once, when she raised her head to look for Lady Charlotte, to her amazement she met the gaze of Basil St. John riveted on her, with a look of deep sorrow. She could hardly believe her eyes, and her limbs shook

under her ; but it was no moment to give way, and she could only feel thankful to see him once again, and looking so far better than she had hoped.

Lord Pendarves meantime, who was no fool, had also seen Evelyn's face when she recognised Basil, and had suddenly become aware that that very pretty-looking high-bred girl must be the Miss Moncrieff whom he had moved heaven and earth to separate from his grandson. He watched her very closely, and with eyes certainly not prejudiced in her favour ; he rather liked her face, and perhaps felt a little sorry to see her looking so ill. She had noticed him too in the one glance she had given in Basil's direction, and had likewise guessed that that tall, distinguished, hard-looking old man was the person who had so shattered her happiness, and that of Basil also, as she now felt convinced on seeing his face.

But the service was over ; and the party then adjourned to the breakfast given by Lady Charlotte at Claridge's. Basil flew thither in the shortest possible space of time, having left his grandfather to find his own way home. His one hope and idea was to see Evelyn, if but for a moment, and to entreat her once more to hear him ; but, alas for human plans ! when he got into the room, there was no Evelyn. She had gone, said Lady Char-

lotte, in answer to Basil's eager inquiries, to help Susan in her room, as there were but a very few minutes before the carriage would be there. But any one who had gone upstairs would have been surprised to see Susan leaning over Evelyn, and giving her sal-volatile, for the excitement had been almost too much, and on coming up to this room she had nearly fainted.

It was a very pretty sight to see Susan in all her bridal attire : her veil thrown back over her shoulders, and her clear bright complexion contrasting well with the rich white dress, with something of new and additional softness in her dark melting eyes.

"I must go down, dear," said Evelyn at last. "I cannot let him think I am afraid to meet him, and must make up my mind to it sooner or later; but let me help you now. I can do it quite as well as your maid."

"No, indeed, you shan't, and there's Charlie knocking at the door and asking if I am ready; and doing authoritative husband already. I'm not going to be bullied for a whole month, Charlie," she called out through the door.

"You go down with him, Evelyn dear. I'll be down directly. Linda will dress me quicker than you. Don't mind, dear, about Basil, it will be over in a moment,

and you must meet him some day, mixed up as we are all together. I do hate that old flint, Lord Pendarves, that I do."

Evelyn got up and joined Charlie, who was stamping up and down the passage outside, in a state of great excitement. "Mr. Hay, you are to take me down, Susan says, and she will follow in a few minutes. She has been doctoring me, like a kind soul as she is, instead of dressing."

"Are you ill, Evelyn?" said Charlie kindly.

"O no, I was only a little knocked up just now," answered Evelyn.

"Come with me, and I'll feed you," said he; "this breakfast being on the new and sensible plan of 'no speeches.' We all go in and out as we like, by which means I am saved from making an inane speech about my lovely wife."

Evelyn took his arm, and was soon supplied by Charlie with food she could not swallow. The length of the room and a crowd was between her and Basil. Soon General Tremaine spied her, and came up in his hearty, kind way, and whispered to her: "Now, my dear little daughter, what can I do for you? you know I mean to look always after you when I can get a chance. Get away, Charlie; what business have you, a married man,

dancing such attendance on other young women? I'll go and tell Susan of you."

"Go and tell her anything that will make her make haste, General!" In such small talk passed the ten minutes that elapsed before the carriage drove up, and Susan, attired for the journey, came down, attended by Aunt Charlotte. A slight scene of confusion occurred, for, as is usual, every one wished to see and say goodbye to the bride, who, contrary to the general rule, looked very bright and happy, having no home to regret, and feeling that she, who had for some time had to think for and take care of others, had now found a protector she loved deeply, who would make her life easy and happy to her. There was but little time for lengthened adieux. Susan was once more tenderly kissed by Aunt Charlotte, who also kissed Charlie in her hurry and excitement, and, as he declared, in his merry, hearty way, established a precedent that he should not give up in a hurry.

The guests soon dispersed. Basil St. John had been trying for an hour to get near Evelyn to speak to her; but the General, seeing how pale and worn she looked, thought it was wiser that he should not have an interview, and contrived to engross her completely.

This was from no feeling of jealousy or anything of

that kind. General Tremaine had seen, from the moment he first spoke on the subject to Evelyn, that his was a perfectly hopeless case, and he now only sought to forget that he had ever cherished such feelings towards her, and to make her forget that he had ever thought of her, save as the dear child of an old friend. And he had succeeded pretty well. We shall soon see how thoroughly he had Evelyn's welfare at heart. Lady Charlotte called to him to come and help her to shut up a large box of jewels, which had just been sent to Susan from some Indian relations, and for a moment Evelyn was alone. Basil was by her side before she knew it. She bowed coldly as he approached, but her blushes told a tale her stiff and assumed manner could not hide. "Won't you shake hands with me, Miss Moncrieff? Evelyn, forgive me," was all he could stammer out. She put her hand in his, "I told your cousin, Mr. St John, that I had nothing to forgive you," she said very quietly, "but I am glad to see that you are looking better; it must be a comfort to Lord Pen-darves."

"Evelyn, for God's sake don't speak to me like that; don't"—

"My dear Evelyn, will you come here?" said Lady Charlotte, and Evelyn moved.

“Evelyn, will you let me see you to-morrow for only five minutes?” cried Basil; “I have something I must tell you. Be merciful; my peace of mind depends on it.”

“What are you dawdling for?” called Lady Charlotte, “I am in such a hurry.”

“Yes, I will, for five minutes; once more, goodbye.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

“WAS IT NOT WELL TO SPEAK ?”

“ Forget thee ! if to dream by night
And think of thee by day ;
If all the homage, deep and wild,
A faithful heart can pay ;
If prayers in absence breathed for thee
To Heaven's protecting power ;
If busy thought, that flit to thee
A thousand in an hour ;
If busy fancy blending thee
With all my future lot :
If this thou call'st forgetting thee,
Then thou shalt be forgot.”

FORTUNATELY for Evelyn Moncrieff, Lady Charlotte Mackenzie had business with her lawyer, which took her to Lincoln's Inn early in the day, and Evelyn was saved from the long explanation she would have had to give her, to account for her interview with Basil. Lady Charlotte had been full of kind regrets at having to leave her alone, and had suggested every sight in London in turn for her to go and see, ending with Madame Tussaud's Exhibition ; but Evelyn said she was tired, and would rather wait at home. Lady Charlotte had several remedies which she then immediately prescribed,

and was deep in a long list of tonics, when the carriage was announced, and she had to depart.

Evelyn threw herself into a chair with a sigh of relief. She could think now, for which her sleepless night even had not given her time; and then again began her anxious questions to herself: What did he want? what could he have to say? Was it possible Lord Pendarves had relented? What could she say to him? Would he guess that she loved him more than ever? *That* he must never know; but she *did*; she felt she did. She got up and paced the room with a nervous, excited step. It was cruel of him, she said, to see her again, now when the heavy bitterness was a little dying away; and her eyes filled with tears, which she hastily wiped away lest traces of them should be seen.

So she waited nearly half-an-hour, when the door opened, and the waiter ushered in one of the Miss Grants, who "could not resist the opportunity, as they were in town, of trying to see dear Lady Charlotte, and the waiter had thought she was in; so sorry to interrupt Miss Moncrieff." Again the door opened, and this time gave admittance to Basil St. John. The presence of a third party saved them at first from a little embarrassment. For a few minutes they spoke of the wedding, when Miss Grant, who, to do her justice, was a good-

natured girl, had an inkling that her room might be better than her company, and got up, leaving many messages for Lady Charlotte.

When the door had closed behind her, Basil walked back to where Evelyn was standing resting her hand on the chimney-piece, and said, after standing silently by her for a minute or two, "Evelyn, I have asked you to see me to-day,—though I feel that you must despise me for a poor, faint-hearted fool,—because, through all these miserable four months that I have spent, morning and noon has one thought been before me, and one hope in my mind,—to entreat your forgiveness."

"Mr. St. John, I have said so many times that I have nothing to forgive you, but if you think I have, oh, fully and freely do I forgive you," she said, and she leant her head on the hand that rested on the chimney-piece, to hide the fact that her eyes swam with tears.

"God bless you for saying so!" cried Basil; "and now I have a little more energy to go on with the grinding, plodding, hopeless life I have before me. Evelyn, do not hate me," he said, coming close to her; "tell me honestly, will you let me ever hope that I may call you mine again, if you see I in any way can make a home for you?"

"Hate you! O Basil!" was all she said, and turned

her tearful face to him, "I thought you did not care for me any more."

Basil's only answer was to take her hand in his and press it to his lips passionately. "O Evelyn, will you indeed try me again? Will you face what must be poverty, my darling, and let me see if I can atone by the devotion of my life for the misery I have caused you?"

Evelyn smiled through her tears, and said, as she looked reproachfully in his eyes, "You know, Basil, I never cared about poverty, so that I might be with you." She was once again folded in his arms, and all the misery of the past was forgotten.

When a long time had been given up to their re-found happiness, the thought of Lord Pendarves occurred to Evelyn: "Basil, dear, what will your grandfather say?"

"I don't care now, my treasure," he said, printing a kiss on her forehead. "I shall be sorry to grieve him; but I have learnt to think differently during all the time that I have been alone; and I do not think he has any right to make me sacrifice my whole life to his fancies. When once he sees you, you insinuating little woman, why, you will make your own way. You know, you are going to be dreadfully poor, and you'll have to make those pretty little hands useful. I am

thankful to say that I can fairly see my way to making you very comfortable in a year or two, dearest, if for the present you won't mind a very tiny home and small ways."

"Don't talk about such things," said Evelyn; "I don't care one straw for any luxuries, and I know I am a good manager, because I kept house for your sister one or two weeks in Scotland, and she said I did it famously. But you must tell her directly, dear; and she won't be pleased, I know. Oh, how I do wish I had some money, and then I don't think any of your people would hate me so much!"

"Evelyn, pray don't ever say that again; it's very cruel of you. And besides, you are going to make me so intensely happy, that the sisters will forget all else in that."

It was settled that Basil would tell his belongings, and that Evelyn would write to the relation with whom she had lived since she grew up, and to Susan, and one or two others. She told Basil of General Tremaine's proposal, and of his very great kindness; ending by saying, "What should you have thought, sir, if I had married him?"

"It would have been no more than I richly deserved, and I am sure he deserved you much more than I did,"

said Basil, as he stroked her fair hair. "The old man was not such a bad judge; and so you wouldn't have him?"

"Don't laugh at him; he has been so good and kind," answered Evelyn.

"I never meant to. He has always been very good to me, and for his kindness to you, my little woman, I shall always be grateful. Oh, if you could guess how through my time abroad I was thinking and wondering what you were doing, and where you were. I think it was entirely owing to Gerald Hinton that I ever dared to come to you again; that and the longing that you would forgive me. He wrote to me, and told me how you were, and all about you."

"Just at the time that I was making myself miserable, because I thought you were going to marry Miss Malet," said Evelyn, twisting her fingers in and out of his.

"What!" cried out Basil; "what do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that for four—no, nearly five weeks, I was fool enough to cry my eyes out, because Lady Luxborough told the General you were to marry Miss Malet when you came back."

"Lady Luxborough be hanged!" said Basil, who went into fits of laughing. "O Evelyn, if you could

see the Miss Malets : great coarse, handsome, underbred, dark women, as vulgar as they can possibly be."

"I didn't think you could care about her very much," said Evelyn. "Ah, it's all very well to laugh about the matter now, but it's been no laughing matter to me."

"And who undeceived you?" he asked.

"Charles Hay ; no, it was that dear, good Susan. Ah, Basil, how she will be pleased ! But there's Lady Charlotte getting out of the carriage, and Lady Luxborough. O Basil, dear, what shall I do ?"

"Leave the old catamaran to me. As for Lady Charlotte, she will be a good friend to us both, as she always was."

When Lady Charlotte got fairly into the room, preceding Lady Luxborough to show her the way, she stopped aghast, and let four or five parcels drop from her hands, on seeing Basil St. John standing by Evelyn.

"My dear Mr. St. John, what a turn you have given me ! Is anything the matter ? You haven't come to tell me Sir Gilbert is dead ? He always looked apoplectic, poor man !"

"Quite the contrary," began Basil ; when Lady Luxborough put in, in a very grumpy voice—

" I'm sure I don't know what the *contrary* of announcing a person's death is, as they can't be born again."

" If your Ladyship had done me the honour to listen till I finished," said Basil, bowing low to Lady Luxborough, " you would have heard me announce to my kind and valued friend," with a slight stress on the word *friend*, " Lady Charlotte Mackenzie, that I have persuaded Miss Moncrieff to share the small home and fortune I can offer her, and be my wife. And," he added, taking Evelyn's hand, and leading her up to Lady Charlotte, " I hope you will continue to us, when married, the great kindness you have ever shown us apart."

" No, really. Evelyn, my dear, and Mr. St. John, I am so glad ; and I always did tell Susan that it would all come right. And how am I to let her know ? two days' post from us. And oh, my dear, you will never again look so sadly,—asses' milk and everything being of no use. But you really have taken my breath away. Ah, you puss, that is why you would not go to Madame Tussaud's, or anywhere. Ain't you surprised, Lady Luxborough ?" she added, turning to that lady, who had put on a face of indignation and scorn combined.

" Surprised !" she began ; " of course I'm surprised

and I expect somebody else will be surprised too. I don't envy you announcing it to Lord Pendarves and your sister. As for Lord Pendarves, as it will probably kill him, you will have no further trouble on his score. I suppose I ought to congratulate you, Mr. St. John, but I never congratulate people till they've been married a good year. *Qui vivra verra*," said Lady Luxborough.

Basil was too happy to snub her much, and said only, "Well, we will try and manage without congratulations, and *qui vivra verra beaucoup de bonheur j'espère*. And now I must go, having to make this fatal announcement to my poor old grandfather;" and he whispered to Evelyn, who followed him to the door with rather an anxious face, "Don't be afraid, dear. I think I understand my grandfather better now than I did a few months ago."

CHAPTER XL.

A NOBLE HEART.

"Sure it is much, this delegated power,
To be consoler of man's heaviest hour !
The guardian angel of a life of care,
Allowed to stand 'twixt him and his despair,
Such service may be made a heavenly task."

The Dream.

DURING precisely the same time that this scene had been taking place at Claridge's Hotel, a rather curious one had been going on in Lord Pendarves' house in Berkeley Square, to explain which we must reveal a little of General Tremaine's state of mind. When the wedding was over, he had walked from the house in a very uncertain state of mind. He had watched Evelyn and Basil anxiously from the moment that they had first recognised each other in the church, and had come to the conclusion that Basil did really care for her as much as he had good reason to know Evelyn cared for Basil. Now his disquietude of mind arose from this ; he had long ago made up his mind, that as he had no

near relatives to whom he could leave his fortune—a comfortable £3000 a year in funded property—that he would leave Evelyn Moncrieff, the daughter of his dear old friend, and his own especial favourite, a large legacy; and though she had refused to marry him, he still adhered to his original plan. But now it occurred to him that a little money at once would be the thing for Evelyn. He might live another twenty or twenty-five years, and then Evelyn would be near fifty before she got it; it would be so much more to her now. What could he do, and how could he do it? He knew full well that if Evelyn got an idea of his intentions before they were executed, that she would not hear of taking the money. He thought of Lord Pendarves, whom he did not know personally, and wondered whether he would withdraw his opposition to the marriage if he heard Evelyn had money. There was nothing in either the girl or her family that he could possibly object to. The General was walking very slowly down St. James's Street, meditating on this matter, and what would be best, when he was clapped on the back in a way which made him jump. He turned, and beheld Lord Luxborough's jolly, good-tempered face.

“ I thought I could not mistake you, old fellow.

Are you doing anything particular, or will you retrace your steps, and walk with me to Berkeley Square? I want to see Pendarves."

Here was a plan which suited the General exactly. Why should he not confide his anxiety to Lord Luxborough, who was one of his oldest friends, and also very intimate with Lord Pendarves?

He acceded with great alacrity, and with their arms linked together they proceeded on their way. The General's was the frankest and most open nature. He soon put Lord Luxborough in possession of his money plan for Evelyn's happiness. He went on to say that he had noticed how devoted she still was to Basil St. John, and that his wish was to help her in that matter also if he could. He said Basil was much improved, and that now he really thought him worthy to be Evelyn's husband. How could he help them?

Lord Luxborough listened very attentively, and when the General paused for his answer, at first he hesitated a little; but when urged to say honestly what he thought, he answered, "What you are thinking of doing, my dear old friend, is just as noble and good as everything I have ever known of you; and while you were speaking an idea came into my head, which I will tell you, and then you can act on it or not as you think

fit. I am going, as you know, to Pendarves. Now, you have not mentioned your intentions to Miss Moncrieff, or said anything to her to lead her to know of this plan of yours. Why should you not see what can be done with Pendarves himself? I will introduce you to him now, and you could say to him, 'My Lord, I hear that you objected to my young friend marrying your grandson because she was so poor. Now, if you will withdraw your opposition, and help Basil a little, I am willing to settle thirty thousand pounds down on her,' for, if I understood you right, that is what you said."

"Capital, capital; the very thing," said the General; "down she shall have it the moment I can draw a cheque."

"And if I know anything of my stern old friend," added Lord Luxborough, "you won't find it very hard to make him hear reason. It's the most liberal thing I ever heard of a man doing."

"Ah," said the General, "I daresay people will say it's Quixotic, and call me an old fool; but, Luxborough, people can only be happy, and it happens that I take out my pleasure in seeing that little girl happy, and I think this is what will make her so. If I thought anything else would do it better, why, I'd try that instead; But here we are at Lord Pendarves' door. This is bearding the lion in his den with a vengeance."

They rang, and were admitted. Lord Pendarves was busy with papers and blue-books, but he welcomed Lord Luxborough very heartily, and assured the General that he was delighted to make the acquaintance of so distinguished an officer and so popular an individual.

Lord Luxborough, after a few trivial remarks, began, to Lord Pendarves' surprise, "Pendarves, I am here partly to act godfather to the General, who was anxious to see you on a little matter of business, and who, not being acquainted with you, did not know how to begin the negotiation, when I offered to do the needful in that way. I am going to read the *Times* in the drawing-room, and leave you two to talk out your affairs in peace," and he left the room.

The General, after glancing at Lord Pendarves' rather surprised face, began by begging he would pardon the liberty, which he assured him nothing but the life-happiness of his dearest friend would have induced him to take, and continued thus: "You have, I think, my Lord, induced your grandson, Mr. St. John, entirely to break off his engagement to my young friend, Miss Moncrieff?"

Lord Pendarves started, frowned, and began, "Really sir, I am at a loss"—

"Pardon me, my Lord, will you hear me to the end, and then answer me? You did so, I understand, solely on the score that the young lady had no fortune, not from any objection to herself, or to the connexion?"

"Certainly, certainly, sir," answered the old peer, more and more astonished. "The Moncrieffs are as good blood as any in England. I do not know the lady, but I never heard anything to make me think she was other than a very estimable person. My objection arose from the fact that my grandson could not marry unless his wife had a fortune of her own. Are you satisfied now, sir?"

The General smiled. "Supposing, my Lord, that I was prepared to show you that, far from being a pauper, Miss Moncrieff would by many be called an heiress, how would that affect the question?" he said, taking a pinch of snuff.

"You are imagining an impossible case, sir," said Lord Pendarves, rather impatiently. "I ascertained all about Miss Moncrieff before I continued my opposition to the marriage, and I do not see what can be the purport of this conversation."

"But will you do me the favour, Lord Pendarves, to suppose her a small heiress, would you still refuse

your consent to what would make this girl happy, and your grandson also?" asked the General.

"You are strangely persistent, General Tremaine; and I cannot understand why you put this question to me; but, in justice to Miss Moncrieff, I am bound to say my objections were based only on the money question."

"Then, my Lord, I have only to say that at this moment I am prepared, if you will give your consent to the marriage, and do what you can for your grandson, to give Miss Moncrieff thirty thousand pounds down," said the General.

"Thirty thousand pounds!" exclaimed the peer, starting from his chair in unbounded astonishment.

"Yes, my Lord. I have known Evelyn Moncrieff from a child. Her father was a dear and valued friend. She would have the money at my death, and I thought that as I could well spare it I would prefer seeing her happy in my life."

"It is the most noble thing I ever heard of," said Lord Pendarves, still much bewildered.

"But you have not yet given me your answer," continued the General. "Will you give your consent?"

"Haven't I? I thought it was implied. I told you my objections were based only on money difficulties.

and *that* I was obliged to think of. My one hope in my old age was to see Basil able to live on the old property, and see it cleared; and I'm an old man, sir, - older than I look. I daresay it has been very selfish; indeed, I know it was; but I've been punished enough by seeing how obeying my wishes has alienated my grandson's affection. I would, I will do anything in the world for the boy. All my savings are now left to him; you can see the will if you choose it, sir. Of course," he said, "if the young people are of the same mind, I shall be very willing to receive Miss Moncrieff as my granddaughter."

"Miss Moncrieff will, I think, forgive Mr. St. John the way in which he behaved. She is the most perfect and truest woman I ever met. I believe through all she has undergone she has remained unchanged in heart to Mr. St. John, and of his feelings for her I have very little doubt, as your Lordship would also think if you had seen him and watched him as I did at Mr. Hay's wedding yesterday. May I so far presume," added the General, "as to ask you, Lord Pendarves, to tell your grandson that the opposition is withdrawn, and not to intimate to him or any one else, what I have said?"

"Certainly; I will tell him that," said Lord Pendarves, as the General also rose. As the latter put his

hand on the door, it opened from the other side, and he stood face to face with Basil, whose face was flushed with happiness, looking a different being from what he had done the day before.

He wrung the General's hand, as if he would wring it off, and then went up to Lord Pendarves, and began : " My dear grandfather, the General is so old a friend of mine, and has known all my affairs for so long, that I am sure he will wait a moment while I speak of something that concerns my happiness very deeply. I had succeeded in winning, as you know, the affections of Miss Moncrieff, and, as you also know, broke off our engagement because I did not wish to act in defiance of your wishes. I now find in this I was highly to blame ; and, having succeeded in making Miss Moncrieff forgive me, and declare that her feelings to me are unchanged, and as nothing could ever change my love for her, we have determined to marry, I thought it my duty to tell you, my dear Lord, first. If you will give us your sanction and your blessing, it would be no slight relief to my mind ; but if, as I fear, you will not do so, I must firmly tell you that this time no opposition on your part will be of any avail. From you, sir," he added, turning to the General, " I know I shall have full sympathy, and I know you will like

that to take place which will be for Evelyn's happiness."

The General looked at Lord Pendarves, who had been looking from the General to Basil with a puzzled and amused expression.

At last, to Basil's great astonishment, he burst out laughing, and said: "Oh, I see the game you two are playing together, and a very good trick to play on the old man you think it, I have no doubt. Basil, my dear fellow, I withdraw all my opposition. It is all removed by the General's most noble proceedings."

"What proceedings? What the deuce does all this mean?" said Basil.

"Gently, gently, Basil. Your grandfather thinks, and naturally enough, that you are a party to a little proposal I have just been mentioning to him, which, I can only assure him, is known to no one but myself and Lord Luxborough, to whom I told it only an hour ago, and who has been in my society ever since."

"General Tremaine, my boy—to make it all clear—has been here this morning, then, to tell me that Miss Moncrieff is as a daughter to him"—the General winced—"and that he will give her on her marriage £30,000, to which most noble proceeding all I can say is, that the same day I will make over to you my

savings, and insist on your accepting the old allowance. Nay, boy, no thanks ; you only make me feel what a brute I have been to you. Thank the General, though, in whose action I can see far more of unselfishness than generally has fallen to my lot in life to witness."

The voice in which Basil said to the General, "God bless you, sir, but we would rather you would not do this,—far rather," was a broken one ; and the General's, "Nonsense, nonsense, it's as much settled as if it was an Act of Parliament," was nearly as shaky. And here, as Lord Luxborough joined the party, we will leave them to discuss the matter, and settle how Lord Pendarves should, with the General, call on Evelyn, and tell her of the plans and intentions of both parties.




CHAPTER XLI.

PAX VOBISCUM.

“ Ha male di troppo bene.”

SIX months have elapsed, and a warm September day is closing in at Achmelvich Castle. Four figures are seated on the top of the hill where we first met and made acquaintance with the heiress. Susan Hay and Evelyn St. John have been sitting there for nearly an hour, and have been just joined by their husbands, who have returned from shooting, and met them by appointment at this spot. There is little change in Susan's face—the same energetic manner and bright face, softened by the happy and useful life she now leads, for she and Charlie are ever thinking of their responsibilities, and working hard to improve the property in every way.

Evelyn's expression is one of great peace and happiness. She is now a bride of two months' standing. It was beautiful to see the way in which her whole



face lit up when her eye met Basil's; and his manner to her was the prettiest thing one could imagine. It seemed as if nothing he could do or say was sufficient to show his devotion to her, and so make amends for the four months of sadness he had caused her to pass. They had all been looking at the setting sun, and admiring the rose-coloured light, now fading into the cold deathlike hue on the distant mountains. Susan had just declared that there was no beauty in the world like the beauty of her native land, when Charlie said suddenly, "Wife, I'm sorry to say that these people say they must go south again next week. I believe they are afraid of your climate any later in the year."

"No, Charlie," answered Basil, "it's not that; but you see I've had three months now quite idle, and though I have given up business, as being more than my shallow brains can manage, now, that it is quite settled that we are to live at the old manor, we want to get back and get into country harness. You see I take the land into my own hands this week, and the sooner we can begin our farming the better; besides, the dear old General is coming to spend the winter months at the cottage, and we want to get it snug for him—don't we, little woman?"

"Yes, dear Susan, I'm afraid we must go. This has

been the most enchanting month that we have spent here ; quite a bright holiday. Never were people made so thoroughly at home as we have been."

"You ought to stay, if it is only to hear a little wholesome advice from Lady Luxborough, who announced her probable arrival before long."

"Oh, that dreadful woman! Have you really got to endure her here? Why do you let her come?"

"Don't you know that in the autumn we Scotch are always overrun with hordes, as the Goths overran Europe; only they come from the south instead of the north. When you go to England, do you take the Franklands *en route*?" asked Susan.

"O yes; I'm to go there to see Edith, whom I hardly know, and to see more of Lord Pendarves, who is as good to me as if he was my own father. *Préjugé vaincu*, isn't it, Basil? How true it has been for us that every 'dark cloud has a silver lining.'"

"And now we must go home," said Susan. "I wonder if the sun often sets on four such happy people as we are? I hope so."



